

OUR VOICE

:: the future of life

:: MAY 2002

after

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Photo & illustration: Pieter de Vos [Quote: Alvin Toffler]



Future shock
[is] the
shattering
stress and
disorientation
that we induce
in individuals
by subjecting
them to too
much change in
too short
a time

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EMPTY PROMISES

"This government, as any government, ultimately will be evaluated by what they do for the poor and powerless – and I do like that phrase."

Clint Dunford
Minister of Human Resources and Employment,
April 11, 2002



Photo: www.painnetworks.com

Almost a year ago, in June of 2001, Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, initiated the Low-income Review. It was his one response to increasing province-wide pressure on his department to address the needs of Albertans living in poverty. The Low-Income Review, which has so far cost the government \$400,000, was completed in September of last year. According to a spokesperson for the Ministry, the Low-income Review Committee received 6000 responses - 5368 in the form of completed questionnaires, 391 as written submissions (individual letters and position papers from groups such as the City of Edmonton, the YWCA, the Alberta College of Social Workers and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters), and the input of 253 citizens who took part in focus groups.

All through the process promises of action have been implied or made and deadlines for accountability have been given by spokespeople for the Ministry. In September, Our Voice was told the report would be released in October. In October, we were told November. The recommendations were going to be incorporated into the 2002 budget. None of this happened.

Instead, on November 15, 2001, Minister Dunford merely informed the Legislature that he had received the report from the Low-Income Review Committee, adding, "I want to congratulate them on all the fine work they've done, but, Mr. Speaker, they've given me a very, very complete, and, I might say, comprehensive report. It's going to take awhile for us to get through that very fine report and then come back to this room with some recommendations."

On November 26, 2001, again in the Legislature, he admitted, "there are many Albertans that are extremely

concerned about what the future is to hold in terms of assistance to Albertans," but concluded, "while some people call for an expeditious review, I for one minister will not be held to other people's timetables."

So people living in poverty in Alberta waited, through one of the harshest winters, in economic terms, in the past ten years. Utility rates skyrocketed. Vacancy rates were close to zero, with rents steadily increasing.

45% of SFI recipients are children

Poor children are at greater risk for:

- hunger and poor nutrition
- poor health
- psychological problems
- learning difficulties
- poor achievement in school
- difficulties with the law

It has been estimated that \$1 spent on children's welfare saves \$7 in future justice, health and social service costs.

Capital Region Housing's waiting list for subsidized housing grew beyond 2000 families. Homeless shelters turned away thousands.

Spring arrived and along with it the hope that the Minister of Human Resources and Employment would remember his promise to include the needs of economically marginalized people in his Ministry's Business Plan for the 2002 Provincial Budget. He didn't. The March 19,

2002, news release of the Government of Alberta, ironically titled "Protecting priorities and assisting those in need", contained one line with regard to their reality: "SFI benefit levels will remain the same."

What has become of the Low-Income Review? Will the public ever see the report on which their government spent close to half a million dollars? Will we ever know how the people of Alberta responded, or will Minister Dunford continue to allude to the report while keeping it carefully under wraps?

Asked these questions in the Legislature on March 16, 2002, the Minister responded that "while we don't have a particular date currently as to when the reports would be made public, we are just about at the point where we can move through the internal process that we have as a government, and then we'll release, at some point in time, the Low-Income Review."

Robert Moyle, media liaison for the Ministry told Our Voice recently that Minister Dunford hasn't released the report because he doesn't want to "face a lot of questions." In light of that fear, two months ago the Ministry set up the Low-income Review Implementation Office, staffed by five government employees, all working full-time to come up with the answers Minister Dunford needs before he can safely release the report.

This stalling has many people extremely frustrated. Robert Stollery, retired president of PCL Construction and outspoken advocate on behalf of impoverished Alberta children, expressed as much at the AGM of the Edmonton Social Planning Council on April 23. He charged the Minister with a disappointing lack of courage in providing leadership with his cabinet colleagues in the area of child poverty.

NATASHA LAURENCE

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THE FUTURE OF LIFE



Photo: Peter de Vos

Edward O. Wilson is on CBC's "Hot Type" talking to host Evan Solomon about his new book *The Future Of Life*. My husband calls me from the other room and, knowing my interests, tells me he has already started taping it.

Wilson is a multi-scientist Harvard professor who has discovered, among other things, over 40 species of ants. From what they cover of the book, I can tell it is an incredible read, and Wilson an incredible human. He uses a powerful argument that the economy is sorely lacking when trying to calculate the cost of conservation of endangered species and places.

The discouraging aspect of this, and other related issues, is trying to get our quasi-democratically elected government officials to listen to science and have some vision. This is one of the main reasons why I was never going to be a mom.

For the last 17 years I have documented the issues that are closest to my heart: climate change, ozone depletion, endangered species, corporate crime and the disappearance of independent media. Coincidentally, the documentation included the evolution of corporate-owned, agenda-driven media - one of the most dangerous and tragic events to truth and democracy.

Who would want to bring a little life form into this kind of toxic soup? How would you arm a child with the knowledge it needed to survive without stealing its hope for the future? How does one keep hope alive inside themselves? Many of my friends say the world isn't savable and all you can do is make your little circle as happy and healthy as you can. I can't do this. I love wilderness and all the life therein and can't stand idly by as it disappears.

If we're in fact "going down" I don't want to go down without a fight.

I don't believe it's too late and thankfully, when I interviewed him for Our Voice two years ago, neither did David Suzuki:

OV: Monopolized media...the government is passing pro-industry bills in record time. How do you cope or what would you say to someone fighting the "David and Goliath Syndrome" who is being constantly overwhelmed?

SUZUKI: Well, I think the first thing is that you can't burn out. One of the things I tell people is 'look, each of us is not going to save the world--the David Suzuki Foundation is not going to save the planet.' So once you know that you don't have this terrible burden of thinking 'oh I gotta win this, I gotta do this, if I don't...' So many environmentalists I know carry the weight of the world on their shoulders because they really believe they've gotta do it. That's a real ego trip and we've gotta be much more humble and realize -- we're insignificant. But if you add up millions of insignificant people and groups, that becomes a force. So be heartened by the fact that there are lots of other folks out there all doing a tiny bit and our little bit is going to make a difference. The other thing to remember is that 15 years ago if you had said out loud 'I think apartheid in South Africa will be dead, that Nelson Mandela will not only get out of jail but he'll become president.' South African people would say 'she's nuts'. If you had said 15 years ago that the Soviet Union will disappear, that there will be only one Germany, that the Berlin Wall would fall and the Cold War would be over again people would have said 'she's nuts'. So change

can happen unexpectedly, explosively and we can't ever give up or become disheartened. More and more people I know want to make a difference, people know we're gonna have to change and they're hungry for it.

I have come back to this interview and read over this statement since then and realized that once you give in to hopelessness, they have won.

Who are "They"? To me, and depending on your degree of knowledge, paranoia, or personal interests, "They" are the corporate interests that give the bottom line priority over any ethical or moral agenda. They are the driving force behind the agenda of our (?) governments and they carry on with their economic pursuits at any cost. Most CEO's wear glasses that don't seem to be working. As Steven Wright puts it, "the prescription's run out."

I found it slightly humorous, if not just a little ironic, that I was wearing my Italian Ernesto Che Guevara shirt when I found out that I was pregnant. And this new found state-of-being was no accident. My perception of motherhood changed when the world changed last September.

Being a news junkie I was chained to three different new channels from September 11 to 15th until I overdosed and had to shut it down for awhile. I was completely leveled by the images that were played ad nauseum and completely nervous about who was in charge south of the border. Miraculously, cooler heads prevailed and they didn't nuke anybody. (But this will be easier to do in the future since Bush's Nuclear Posture Review has requalified nuclear weapons as possible weapons of

convention).

After trying to absorb the post-September 11th-world I felt differently, very differently about our Earth and the inhabitants. There was no biological clock ticking, never has been. But something was different in me. I looked at the truly remarkable man that I've been with for ten years and knew that a life form should happen between us.

Okay, so what about the planet just reaching 6 billion people, the majority of them poverty stricken and starving? How could a person that considered themselves ecologically responsible add to that total? Well, one of three rules that we came up with (and quickly informed our parents about) was NO disposable diapers EVER. At every turn I will attempt to lessen the environmental impact this child has on the world. The second rule: NO name brands EVER. If anyone brings us a BabyGap shirt, they will be front row centre to a dramatic recitation of multilingual profanity. For as long as I can help it, our kid is not gonna advertise for any criminal multinational corporation. Once he/she starts school and gangs of Nike kids are threatening to beat up anyone who doesn't wear their logo, well... I can only cross this bridge when we come to it. Some ideas might be to teach them Kung Fu at an early age or, even better, independent thought. That way they might want to lecture their class on Adbuster's agenda. This would only be done if the child thought of it, not at my prompting - (but it's gonna be tough).

The last of the three rules, one which seems to be the toughest: No plastic toys. I hate the plastics industry, or at least, want to lessen my support to them as much as possible. (WWF has a great pamphlet on hormone disrupting chemicals that everyone should read). My two nephews have a room full of plastic toys and they end up playing more with the box or bag the toys came in.

My mom and my sister were born to be moms. Me, I had other interests. I have been arrogantly guilty of looking at women who were pregnant as people who lacked higher pursuits, (Karma in action here). I have also been guilty of loathing many typically female traits: talking on the phone at length, shopping, make-up, soap operas, gossiping, etc. Many of these things, to me, are still not the best things to do with your time. Shopping feeds the dangerous consumer cycle and gossiping, well, let's just say it's part of the dangerous soap opera cycle.

My husband has just come into the office telling me that he's taping a show on CBC's "Disclosure" about local townspeople that had attended a meeting about a sour gas well near their town who were then targets of police surveillance. The people were labeled eco-terrorists and are now the target of something called "enhanced policing". I sigh, even though I'm glad he's taping it for me. I think about a sticker that my friend Nancy gave me that said "If Your Not Outraged, Your Not Paying Attention". Yep, there's a lot to be outraged about. But like Suzuki said, if we all do just a little bit more, we can change the world. Never lose faith, never let discouragement win, never get jaded and, apparently, never say you'll never get pregnant.

DALE LADOUCEUR

Bill and Dale are independent musicians, working, living, and writing in Edmonton. Their family includes their dogs Sagan and Mingo and the life form yet-to-be-named.

FUTURE **F**

I often wonder what future historians will say about us. One sentence will suffice to describe modern man: he fornicated and he read newspapers.

ALBERT CAMUS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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L LETTERS

All my **letters** are read. I like that. I usually put something in there that I would like the staff to see. If some of the staff are lazy and choose not to read the mail, I usually write on the envelope "Legal Mail." This way it will surely be read. It's important that we educate everybody as we go along.

JEAN GUMP

Just a quick note to let you know that as recently as the past three months I started purchasing your newspaper "Our Voice". I am completely floored by the intelligent, compassionate yet point blank, non-imposing vehicle you have created to get us (the non-economically marginalized people of our society) to understand and empathize with the less fortunate. What I do now is buy 5 of the newspapers: \$1 each to 5 different yellow badged vendors. I keep one for myself and pass the other four on to my son, my brother, a colleague of mine, and one of my professors at Grant MacEwan College. I check out all the websites published, I pass on the quotes and tidbits of information at the bottom of each page daily through e-mails to friends, colleagues, etc., and I read the newspaper on my lunch break.

I have always taught my son (21 years old) that in our society it is not only our obligation as human beings, but our reward to help build and maintain safety nets for the less fortunate, even though we are struggling ourselves. And trust me, I am struggling! Please keep the newspaper alive and I will do my part by continuing to pass it along.

VERA MCKAY

It never ceases to amaze me that papers such as yours can cover more of the important issues than the mainstream papers.

Thank you for your excellent, excellent coverage of the conflicts re Mazankowski. It may interest you to learn that he is also a Director on an International Lobbying firm, GPC International. This is a position he took 9 months after he accepted the Chair of the Premier's Advisory Committee.

Their website states that the firm lobbies governments. The GPC website states that it is "a company that specializes in the development and delivery of strategic advice in government and public relations." (www.gpcinternational.com) He took this position 9 months after his appointment by Premier Klein (Oct 2/00). (He had been appointed Chair of the Advisory Committee Jan 3/00).

You may also be interested in the studies done by Colleen Flood, Steven Lewis, S.E.D. Shortt and others who took the Maz report apart in detail. (<http://www.healthcarepartners.com/hp/24Mazanowski/>)

Thank you again for your excellent work. It never ceases to amaze me that papers such as yours can cover more of the important issues than the mainstream papers. We all know the reasons!

VERNA MILLIGAN



Beyond Enforcement

As a Norwood resident over the last several years who has never encountered a prostitution/solicitation incident in the immediate vicinity of my home, I feel that I cannot criticize how people a couple of blocks away actually feel when they have had to deal with this as part of their daily experiences. I therefore will say that I sense that it is a cause of real feelings of degradation and worry about personal safety to have this imposed activity characterize one's home environment.

I wonder however whether the catalogue of repressive techniques that Michael Walters listed is the strategic way to deal with the menace.

When Tony Campolo, the theologian and member of the International Board of Habitat for Humanity came to a rally in

Edmonton in 1994, he had very harsh words for people who would try and censor peoples' right to "communicate" with "known prostitutes." He gave a personal account of a trip he made to a Latin American city, and was accosted by a group of five young girls. He invited them to dinner. He found their conversation very engaging. He invited them to his room. They spent the night sharing information and developed a close rapport with each other. They made permanent residence due to this social experience.

Mr. Campolo is very iconoclastic. He made his statements in a fundamentalist church, but his message was extremely memorable. He is appalled with the clearly police state oriented approach that some people would promote in dealing with this subject.

Democratic values are surprisingly undeveloped in our community. Some agencies have a distorted view of how a "troublemaker" ought to be defined. In order for Edmonton to attain an accountable social consensus, where we have government by persuasion, rather than by intimidation, we will have to identify the conflict of approaches when dealing with subjects like eradication of street prostitution.

A starting point would be to look at what are the statistically greater results in using "developmental" methods rather than relying on "prescriptive" tactics. The research from Resiliency Associates in Berkeley has found that helping people find answers to their challenges in life is about 8 times more effective than telling people what to do in a punitive way. Aiding in the cultivation of more rewarding social networks is the kind of activity that groups like CAP and Street Solutions could engage in. Thus far, unfortunately, all I have seen in this area are projects that rely on symbolism rather than real social network re-orientation.

If people have ideas on how to bring the community together in pursuit of this ideological choice, there will be a human rights forum at the Heritage Room of City Hall on Wednesday, May 1, 2002, 7:00-10:00 P.M. The theme of this forum is creation of solidarity with other groups in the Free Trade Zone on developing a baseline of standards for services and access to common law legal protections.

ALAN BLANES

PRESIDENT PRO-TERM ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION



Kevin Fox, **Our Voice** vendor



Raymond Tudor, **convicted killer**

Mistaken Identity

"I went from Citizen of the Month to Criminal of the Moment" says Kevin Fox, describing his brush with the law in late March.

A quiet day of vending in front of the downtown public library became an adventure in mistaken identity. A woman disembarking from a bus at the transit stop was struck by Kevin's resemblance to Raymond Tudor, a convicted murderer who had escaped the day before from Drumheller Institution. (Tudor's escape, complete with a photo of the convict, had been featured on page 5 of the Edmonton Sun that day.) He had the same beard, the same glasses, a nose, ears and eyes; it all added up (though why Tudor would be selling a street paper in broad daylight just hours after he disappeared from prison is a question to which there is no answer, because, in fact, he wasn't).

Unbeknownst to Kevin, the police were called, and as he continued to vend, a patrol car drove up and parked in front of the library.

"Shortly before the police arrived, I had seen a man running across the street and around behind the building. I thought that

might have had something to do with the police being there, so I went up to the patrol car and knocked on the window. I said, 'Are you looking for someone?'" An innocent and helpful question, or the cunning plan of a criminal mind seeking to subvert and confuse the agents of justice? Who knew? Certainly not the officers involved. Another patrol car pulled up and, as Kevin watched curiously, the two officers sauntered nonchalantly past him into the front entrance of the library. They reappeared moments later from the doors of Second Cup directly behind the vendor, and catching him by surprise, proceeded to question him about his whereabouts earlier in the day. Puzzled but co-operative, Kevin recounted doing his laundry, going to the bank to get his rent money and visiting with friends. It was only after one of the officers held up a copy of the Sun saying, "It does look like you, but not exactly," that Kevin understood what was going on.

To add to the fun, the incident was captured by Global television and aired on the six o'clock news that evening. Kevin's fate was sealed. Now everywhere he goes he's known as 'the man who looks like the convict' and he's developed the habit of saying to anyone who glances at him any longer than necessary - "It's not me, really. It's not me."

OV STAFF

No Emergency No Excuses

In the last few months we have been subjected to a lot of hand wringing and whining on behalf of the Provincial Ministers. They speak in troubled voices about economic emergencies and the province's precarious financial position. "There is no money," they cry as they prepare to bank their pay raises.

The fact is there is money. What there isn't is an emergency. There is not now, nor has there ever been an emergency. The projected budget surplus from last year is half-a-billion dollars. This year's budget included \$700 million in increased revenues from fee hikes and new charges. It was also based on projected oil prices of \$20 (US) a barrel and natural gas prices of \$3.00 per thousand cubic feet. Those are, if you will pardon the pun, conservative estimates. In the final quarter of the government's last fiscal year oil prices averaged \$23(US) and in March and April were as high as \$26(US), while natural gas averaged \$3.57.

Any \$1 change to the price of oil means \$153 million in royalty revenues: A ten-cent rise in natural gas prices equals \$143 million added to the government coffers.

So where's the emergency? Where's the reason to hold our tongues and tighten our belts? Where's the justification for allowing poverty and homelessness to continue in this wealthiest of all provinces?

It exists only in the minds and rhetoric of the overpaid, pot-bellied protectors of everything that is good for big business.

The poor have waited long enough. They have listened to more than enough excuses and more than enough empty promises. Wasn't it only a few months ago that Ralph Klein, still stinging from his humiliating and insulting visit to the Herb Jamieson men's shelter, promised real answers to homelessness? What happened to that promise? Did it

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Illustration: Pieter de Vos

disappear along with the tears of contrition he shed for the television cameras? The homeless are still here, Mr. Klein, even if you haven't stopped by lately.

It would take only two small commitments from this government to begin to change the lives of people living in economic poverty in Alberta:

- Seventy-two million dollars would allow an increase of \$200 in the average monthly income of people in need of SHI (based on the current caseload). This is simply a cost of living increment, long overdue since rates were cut back and frozen in 1993.

- Sixty-eight million dollars committed to low-income housing by the provincial government would bring an additional 68 million federal dollars into the province for a total of \$136 million to address the critical shortage in affordable housing in Alberta.

The money is there. And it's time some of it was spent to address poverty and homelessness.

NATASHA LAURENCE

Our Voice and Songs of the Street wish to thank the Stroll of Poets Society, Mark Kozub and the Raving Poets Band, Phil Jagger, the Stanley Milner Library and everyone else who contributed their time, effort and co-operation in raising funds for the Songs of the Street.

The Raving Poets can often be found hosting Tuesday evening poetry nights at the Backroom Vodka Bar On Whyte Avenue. "C'mon man, support the poet!"

EDITORIAL **E**

Editor: a person employed by a newspaper, whose business it is to separate the wheat from the chaff, and to see that the chaff is printed.

ELBERT HUBBARD

Snake Eyes

As Ralph Klein and his cronies relax over a refreshing diet cola (of course) at their favorite watering hole after an exhausting afternoon's labour in the Legislature the only thing that must give them more satisfaction than looking at the big increase that appears on their MLA pay slips must be watching how day after day the media helps them out by keeping stories about the demise of the Community Lottery Boards on the front pages.

In the six weeks since the provincial budget was made public there has been an endless parade of coverage that would lead the average Albertan to believe this shift of \$51 million in a \$20 billion budget is the greatest catastrophe to strike our lives in years.

The media, many community groups and municipal politicians are giving the Tory government a wonderful free ride by their single-minded focus on this issue.

How much coverage have you seen over the same six weeks on the continued underfunding of welfare, cut to current immoral rates nine years ago? Or about the continued stubbornness of this government refusing to put up the dollars to match federal money to build social housing despite the crisis there? Or about underfunding of child care, so Albertans working in daycares are about the worst paid in the country?

How much attention has the media given to the pathetic fact that much of the money

given out through the Community Lottery Boards went, not to little extras like new uniforms for the soccer team or tableclothes for the senior's drop in, but to schools, health care facilities, the public library, the University of Alberta and the city itself (\$3.7 million in the year 2000 for example)? What the heck is so wonderful about schools depending on this program to have decent facilities, equipment and programs for our children's education? Or for hospitals to have to do the same so we can have adequate health care?

I read a quote attributed to the mayor of St. Albert, Richard Plain, saying of the lottery board money, "These are the playgrounds in the schools, the birthing room in the Sturgeon General Hospital, these are the facilities for disabled people...." As if the end of the program was to be blamed for such things not being available in our community!

What's wrong with this thinking? Why aren't we putting a fraction of the outrage and energy going into "saving" the Community Lottery Boards into demanding that most of the things that have been funded by this money be recognized as the responsibilities of the government to fund adequately and continuously in a properly planned and budgeted way as part of the way a civil society works, especially in one of the richest little corners of the entire planet?

And by the way, the money has not disappeared into thin air— the way over \$150 million did last year just before the provincial election, when most of us got cheques in the mail from the government to buy our votes by claiming to help with our utility

bills. No, the money is still there. Some of it is probably going into an increase to the Family and Community Support Services program that the province funds in municipalities so that community groups can provide services to children, youth and families, and that is also distributed by local community boards. And community groups will still be getting their hands on \$200 million through casinos and bingos, thanks to the government's promotion of a wide range of gaming and gambling opportunities as part of its vision of what a good society is.

Yes, I agree ending the CLBs is a top-down insult to people, taking decision-making away from the community even though the money has come from there. And I agree the random and sudden way this government does such things out of the blue with no notice is unfair and causes disruption. But it's time to put this issue in perspective and start devoting serious attention to the multitude of other shortcomings and failures of the budget besides this one.

While we have been treated to day after day of coverage of this issue the government has slipped through the whole process of department by department debate of the budget with almost no public scrutiny.

Yes, if I was an Alberta cabinet minister I'd be quite glad of how much easier my job was being made thanks to this distraction. I'd just sit back and enjoy one more diet cola before heading home to hope the news had some new angle on the story to entertain the masses today....

JIM GURNETT

THE SACRED COW



O OPINION

The corporate grip on opinion in the United States is one of the wonders of the Western World. No First World country has ever managed to eliminate so entirely from its media all objectivity—much less dissent.

GORE VIDAL

This time last year I was newly returned from the FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City. This year I am preparing to participate in the G8 Summit protest activities in Calgary and Kananaskis. In reflecting on the intervening year, the events that have shaped my attitudes are very vivid. In Genoa a demonstrator was killed in the street, an event we all expected and dreaded, given the escalating violence of both police and protestors. September 11th scarred everyone. The resulting violence in Afghanistan and the spreading conflict in the rest of the Middle East is fodder for apocalyptic paranoia. The collapse of the Argentine economy and images of ordinary people desperate enough to loot food stores is shocking. Edmonton didn't escape; the Whyte Avenue riot and the Bill C-36 demonstration were our contribution to the prevailing discontent. In addition and as usual, around the world the four horsemen continue to try to stamp life back into the mud it emerged from. A lot has happened between then and now.

We went to Quebec City full of an idealistic desire to let the rest of the country know that our government is participating in trade agreements that will destroy its ability to protect citizens' rights, health, education, jobs and national resources. We were full of fire and energy, ready to mix it up in the streets with riot police, tear gas and water cannon in an effort to wake up the rest of the country. In most parts of Canada the event was good for a sound bite on the evening news and six inches in the local paper for a couple of days.

The preparations we make for Calgary and Kananaskis are quiet, sober and

The message that activists are taking to the streets now are not about government, police and big business being wrong or evil, but that human life is intrinsically valuable and beautiful. The marketplace and government can be tools to serve all; they do not have to be mechanisms for the few to control the many.

intense. The events of the last year have convinced activists that we have to do more out there on the street than play games with the cops. Western culture has been traumatized by events of the last year. The protest community has chosen to respond to this trauma by learning a new way of doing things. In a meeting of a local planning committee for the G8 event, a planner said she had talked to Calgary RCMP. They told her that they had learned from Quebec City. They realized now that the fence was a provocation, the level of police intervention and tear gas excessive. They didn't want that happening in Calgary. The response of the group to this was guarded. There is not much trust left between citizen and police, but protesters also want a more powerful way of delivering a message than with mindless violence.

Last year training centered around preparations for violent encounters with police: what to do with injuries from tear gas and pepper spray, what to wear, what to bring. This year's preparations focus on developing inner strength through grounding and personal commitment, not about returning tit for tat. The message that activists are taking to the streets now are not about government, police and big business being wrong or evil, but that human life is intrinsically valuable and beautiful. The marketplace and government can be tools to serve all; they do not have to be mechanisms for the few to control the many. In changing their own behavior protesters are telling the world that change is possible. In Washington recently 35 to 50 thousand demonstrators protested events in Palestine with no altercation with the police and no arrests.

All over the world larger and larger groups are assembling, quietly and soberly to ask for social justice. We don't hear much about these assemblies in the conventional media. However, anyone who wants to check out the world scene can drop into any public library and cruise the Internet. A search beginning with the key word "activist" will open many doors. All over the world people are asking their leaders to remember what their job is. That is, to be

leaders, to value the trust that is placed in them by their people, to enter negotiations with those other almost sovereign powers, the multinational and transnational corporations with their priorities to those they represent firmly in place.

At the end of June people will be participating in a G6B Counter Conference, named for the rest of us six billion inhabitants of the world to be hosted at the Calgary University the week prior to the G8 Conference. There is a Family March planned in Calgary the weekend of the conference, permitted if not exactly welcomed by police and city fathers. There will be a Solidarity Camp at the Stony Reserve on the highway 27 klicks outside of Kananaskis. Those who attend these events will be asking our world leaders to show in their conduct with other world leaders and big business just where their priorities are, with people or with profit.

This year has created a huge change of attitude among demonstrators. We are cool, centered and determined. We ask that the global marketplace start reflecting a human oriented ethic, that it cease dictating a profit-oriented ethic based on the premise that might is right and greed is a virtue. We are prepared to insist, quietly and relentlessly. It's going to take a lot of us to make this point. We may have to gather in our thousands and millions in many public places all over the world to make this point. We will do what we have to do. Last year we were excited and impetuous; this year we are calm and resolved. As humans we have to change our ways of relating to each other and the planet to survive. It is just as simple as that — so protesters are starting with changes in how they conduct their own activities.

THERESA MCBRYAN



Keeping up with Changes

Putting change in the bank and saving for a rainy day is not the same as change in one's life. The change I went through in the last few months has been the work of the Creator and a little help from my friends. This brought to mind that the word "change" is much more than a word. Change has to begin with a mind open to new directions of the sacred circle and not being focused in one way. This brought me to deeper understanding of how change is so important. This is one of the many stories of change I have been writing about in my spare time.

Being able to have friends who teach me about change and spending time with them is a blessing. I kept running into my friend at the oddest times of the day and I really didn't know what to make of him at first. The one thing I noticed was that huge smile of his and the many hats he wore. I truly believe his face is not going to fall to pieces if he smiles and being a cowboy poet is a great way to pass the time. I was invited

into his home and my life has changed in the short time I have been spending there. The works of the Creator seem to be much stronger when there are friends helping with open hearts. They have been my teachers on many different levels and being able to change in the process has made me stronger. I was looking back to the days when friends were just someone you could score from or use until the money was gone or whatever was available at the time. Those times of craziness were just another way to escape into the darkness of reality. I could never be trusted because of my ways and the alcohol didn't help much. When I look back to those days it just makes wonder where it would have taken me if I hadn't stopped what I was doing.

I really believe it's the true friends who helped me see a different way and to treat others with respect. That's why I believe no one is beyond help because all I have to do is look at what the Creator has made and see a person with a soul like everyone else. I

have learned also to put things in their place and to leave them there for others to use when they come calling. If it were not for the many friends in my life, and not forgetting my family, it would be a very boring life for me. They are the ones who teach me things about growing up and seeing the workings of people helping people.

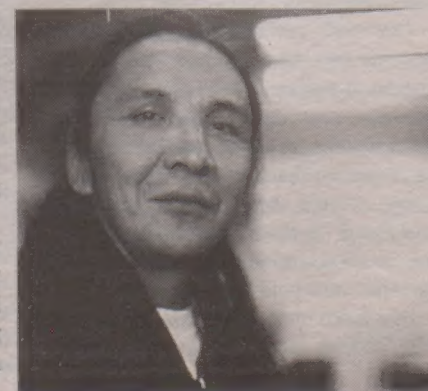
Friendship with all my friends is different with some people — in the same sense I treat them all the same. There were days I just didn't want to keep going on with being free and for some reason a friend would accidentally run into me. Then whatever I was going through at the time was forgotten and then the change takes place. The windows of the soul tell a lot about a person and sometimes I suspect my friend sees more than what my friend is telling me. All my friends look in the window of the soul and take from there. I am happy that it's because of my friends that change has taken place and the teachings have just begun.

Being redefined in certain areas of my life is the same as going back to school only this time my friends are the teachers. If I learned one thing about change it is that friendship is treated with respect and when

times get tough they will be there. Yes, change has taken place and the sacred circle is opening up to let others in. If one thing could be said it's that change must come from self and friends are the ones that can help. It just has takes an open mind and a whole lot of belief in self.

LEN BLACKFOX MARTIAL

I am looking for a title for my column and if any of the readers can help please email me. len0853@yahoo.com



THE STREET GOODS

Photo: www.painnetworks.com



It strikes me as a little odd that people who are willing to spend a fortune in tanning booths are willing to obstruct the rights of people who come by their colour naturally.

COLOUR **C**

Colourblind

I guess I'm a pretty lucky guy. I've never been told I can't ride the bus because my pass is two days past the expiry date on a long weekend. I've never been refused service in a restaurant because they don't want to serve "my kind". I've never been accused of drinking in public because I had a coke bottle sticking out of my coat pocket and someone made the assumption it was mixed. I've never been left stranded late at night in the suburbs because my transfer time ran out after I was foolish enough to get on the wrong bus without discovering my mistake until it was too late. I've never been yelled at for leaning on someone else's car at a mattress warehouse waiting while three people who arrived after me were served ahead of me. I've never even been asked for cash up front by a cab driver—even though I often go around dressed like I'd be lucky to have the price of a cup of coffee on me, let alone a taxi ride. I've never called on the phone to rent an apartment and arrived to be told someone else had already rented it.

I have friends who haven't been so lucky

in these situations. All these things that I never had to go through they did. It strikes me as a little odd that people who are willing to spend a fortune in tanning booths are willing to obstruct the rights of people who come by their colour naturally. The worst thing that has ever happened to me because of my appearance is to have someone ask me—rather rudely—why I don't get a job. That's a little hard to take when I've been out there six hours or more and I'm only up a pack of smokes and a bus ride home. But it doesn't happen every day—and I usually manage to consider where it comes from.

Now you could make the case that these things happened to my friends because of the way they present themselves, or because they were behaving in a manner not quite acceptable by industrial world standards. I could make the case that Canadian Tire is a good place to buy a shovel. Canada, by constitutional law, is a country where cultural values are supported, and everyone has the right to be where they want to be and do what they want to do as long as

they aren't breaking any laws.

I have a friend who was barred for life from walking through the University campus because some campus cop thought that would be a fitting punishment for his getting off the LRT drunk. My friend would not put one foot down on the campus property until he was told his constitutional rights had been violated.

When he knew he was in the right and that he had support, he challenged the ruling. He walks through the campus or the LRT station, and nobody tries to tell him he can't do that. But can you believe that for a year he was kept from riding the train or vending on U of A property because someone overstepped his authority? I seriously doubt he would have been barred if he were white. Maybe for 24 hours, and I can understand that, but not for life. He got a little corner of his humanity back by his challenge of abuse of power, and I applaud him for having the courage to do it.

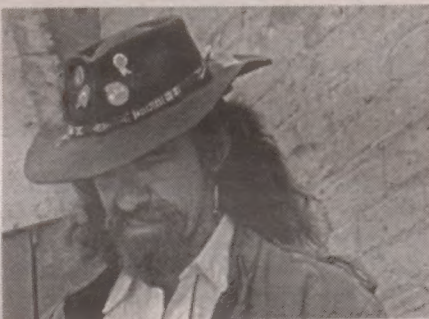
When certain behaviors and perceived images rooted in street culture collide with industrialized standards of appropriate behaviours, people have a pretty strong reaction to them. That I can understand.

Street culture is a world of its own, with its own values, protocols and perceptions. That may be what the waitress in the restaurant was looking at when she said,

"we don't serve your kind". That may have been what the campus cop was looking at when he said, "you're barred for life". I know the looks I sometimes get because of my hat and my "wild hair". When those looks bother me, I have to remind myself that I chose to look that way and I can change it when I want to. My friends didn't choose the colour of their skin, and they certainly never invited my ancestors over here. I didn't choose to be here either, but I did choose to stay, and to learn a little bit about another culture. I like to think that's made some kind of a difference. If everyone could learn to be blind to another person's colour instead of being blinded by it, I think that would make some kind of a difference too.

JAKE

cowboyjakeca@yahoo.com



The Magic of Being Me

Wow... I finally made it! I've spent a lifetime getting here and now I'm finally joining the ranks of The Street People. I am a rookie vendor for Our Voice and I'm glad that that's what I'm doing. It's been hard work staying intact long enough to get here and I can't believe it's really happening. There's a certain dreamlike quality to the whole thing that makes me think I'm just imagining it. Just like when I was a little kid in the sandbox and I used to pretend—no, in fact I really was—anybody I chose to be. Today, I can honestly say that I have earned back that freedom—with years of indentured service to a social system I've never given allegiance to. I have survived the very worst that industrialized society could dump on me and, like the mythical Phoenix, have emerged from the dialectic of

my life triumphant in the conflicting monuments of my experience.

Most of my life I've been pretty lucky. Something has always watched over me and helped me to get up again after I've been knocked down and sometimes I've been picked up and lifted pretty high too. Of course, there have been times when I've been down and out—so far down that nobody's even noticed the tiny infinitesimal dot that was still me. Sure, there have been times I found a stumbling stone and got asked what rock I crawled out from under. Sure, I've taken my turn at panhandling or working street festivals from some angle or another. Sure, there have been times when I hungout on the streets just to be near some real people. However, each time I got that close to the integral core that is me, I was attacked by an army of glittering concepts

that distracted and possessed me, cluttering up my life with all sorts of materialistic baggage that interfered with the more important business of my personal survival. So what's so special about me being where I am right now? What's so different this time about the ups and downs of my life? Quite simply, I am here this time by choice and not by dire need. This time I am walking in my truths with my dignity and self-respect intact. This time is my time. I don't have to pretend to anything so I don't have to flee from hypocrisy anymore. Pursuit of the things I hold most dearly has led me to a more marginal social existence that doesn't readily complement working in a standardized setting. I'm ready now to reach forward to whoever I may become, to claim the space that is mine. The task of discovery, the promise of vision, the hope of my heart—delight in altered perspective, enchantment with creative expression—all combine to nurture the strength and courage of my spirit. I'm enthralled with

learning to speak my truths, to find my voice, to exercise my inalienable human right to free will. This time I am prepared to discover the magic of being me! Authentic existence! Self-actualization! Transformation! Mystical Sandbox Magic - where all things are possible! This is what it means to me to be joining the ranks of The Street People - The Real People.

Okay, so I'm just another face with a story. Okay, so maybe I'm an idealist, a romantic and at least a little warped. Okay, so maybe I'm suffering from an identity crisis too—I don't fit in anywhere else and I'm a recovering agoraphobic who likes to travel. One thing for certain though, even if some of this sounds like I'm being sarcastic, I really I do mean everything I said. I'm just a poor rusty writer due for a good oil change and am truly thankful that Our Voice is here to provide me with a vehicle for collecting as much of that "good ole (spare) change" as I can.

MISTY WELLS

G GLOBAL

The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village.

MARSHALL MCLUHAN



PRESIDENT CASTRO HAD A POINT

In their proposed final statement on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg in August, the Environment Ministers of the eight leading industrialized countries indicate that they will again support the corporate trade agenda of the WTO, this time by linking globalization to the ever-elusive concept of "sustainable development". Their statement, leaked by the Council of Canadians on April 12th, proclaims that "[the WSSD] should be a point of convergence for the positive outcomes achieved at the Millennium Summit in New York, World Trade Organization negotiations in Doha and the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey."

But for the G8 Ministers to view the outcomes of these meetings as entirely positive is crude revisionist history. For example, when Cuban President Fidel Castro informed the March 2002 Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico that "the existing world economic order constitutes a system of plundering and exploitation like no other in history" he enjoyed a standing ovation before storming from the meeting. This hardly constitutes an unqualified endorsement of globalization-as-sustainable-development.

It would be easy enough to dismiss Castro's antics as just another loser's rant. After all, the President is an old, unreformed, 1960s-style 'commie' barely hanging on in the age of globalizing capitalism. But what about that standing ovation? Castro's words must have resonated with some of the delegates. Let's open our minds. The fact is that President Castro had a point. The real question is why has most of the developed world ignored that evidence for so long?

One answer is that over the past twenty-five years the governments of market democracies, abetted by the mainstream media, have all but programmed their citizens to ignore it. Today we scarcely acknowledge disconcerting trends in international development until some horrific event knocks us on the head - think 9/11. This apparent unconsciousness exposes one of the great enigmas of human social behavior. We claim to be rational beings. Our techno-industrial society has long rejected myth and superstition and revels in scientific truth. Yet, this entire script is itself little more than shared illusion. So-called "modern" society remains as self-delusory

Part of the problem is that the great ship 'Globalization' has lost its theoretical keel. It continues to make headway only because its tattered sails are filled by the unrelenting rhetorical bluster of those whose cargo it carries.

and myth-bound as any that has preceded it.

Now mass delusion is not always a bad thing. Cultural myths are the necessary glue for social cohesion and national unity. But there is a darker side in which our shared illusions amount to little more than deep denial in the service of nefarious ends. (Remember the Holocaust?) As writer Derrick Jensen has observed, "For us to maintain our way of living, we must... tell lies to each other, and especially to ourselves... The lies act as barriers to truth. The barriers... are necessary because without them many deplorable acts would become impossibilities."

Contemporary history illustrates just how ready humanity is to delude itself in the face of contrary evidence. In recent years the governing elites of the market democracies have persuaded or cajoled virtually the entire world to adopt a common myth of uncommon power. All major national governments and mainstream

international agencies are united in a vision of global development and poverty alleviation centred on unlimited economic expansion fuelled by open markets and more liberalized trade. For the first time, the world seems to be converging on a common development ideology, one that promises ever-increasing wealth for everyone, everywhere.

The downside is that constant repetition of the myth has so conditioned the population that the majority seems incapable of applying the basic rules of evidence to the growing cascade of data that refute it. Instead, we deflect uncomfortable truths by telling reassuring lies to each other; we dismiss open-eyed globalization protesters as dangerous uninformed rabble "who must be crushed". Meanwhile, living the myth is depleting the world's ecosystems, rending our social fabric and ultimately undermining world security.

What has gone wrong? Why has the prevailing development paradigm strayed so badly off its charted course? Part of the problems is that the great ship 'Globalization' has lost its theoretical keel. It continues to make headway only because its tattered sails are filled by the unrelenting rhetorical bluster of those whose cargo it carries. This is no minor structural flaw. The assumed benefits of a fair and efficient global marketplace depend on key assumptions of the theory of 'general competitive equilibrium'. However, as British economist, Professor Paul Ormerod documents, there are "...so many violations of the conditions under which competitive equilibrium exists that it is hard to see why the concept survives, except for the vested interests of the economics profession and the link between prevailing political ideology and the conclusions which the theory of general equilibrium provides."

Fellow economist James K. Galbraith of the University of Texas is similarly disenchanted with neo-liberal theory. According to him, the empirical evidence "flatly contradicts" the major premises and findings of economic analysis. Galbraith takes this disconnect from reality as evidence of a "...nearly complete collapse of the prevailing economic theory... It is a collapse so complete, so pervasive, that the profession can only deny it by refusing to discuss theoretical questions in the first place."

In these circumstances, we should hardly be surprised that the new world economic order is not delivering the promised goods even on its own terms. Third World poverty

reduction is ostensibly the major goal. However, the structure of the real-world global financial system ensures that the benefits of global growth accrue mainly to the already wealthy, those who designed and promote the globalization agenda (and who mostly live in the G8 nations). Many debtor nations are forced under World Bank-International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programs to spend more of their income servicing debts to the world's richest nations than providing social services to their own impoverished citizens, and to raise the money they often have no choice but to plunder their natural resources. Market-based development can thus do real harm to entire peoples and to the ecosystems that support us all. Globalization protesters know this and many development analysts know this but, in 1999, when Joseph Stiglitz, then Chief Economist of the World Bank (and a Nobel Laureate) admitted to the problem, the myth prevailed. Stiglitz was noisily fired for breaking with WB/IMF ideology.

The data, however, cannot be so readily dismissed. In the 1960s 'only' three dollars flowed North for every dollar flowing South; by the late 1990s, after thirty years of unprecedented growth and increasing globalization, the ratio had grown to seven to one. Chronic poverty prevails in much of the South and the income gap between high-income OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] countries and the South is growing. The absolute gap is widening everywhere and even the relative income gap is increasing for most regions. In 1970 the richest 10% of the world's citizens earned 19 times as much as the poorest 10%. By 1997, this ratio had increased to 27:1 and the wealthiest 1% of the world's people commanded the same income as the poorest 57%. Just 25 million rich Americans (4% of the world's people) had a combined income greater than that of the poorest 2 billion of the world's people (43% of the total population). As I said, President Castro had a point.

All of which raises a final question: Is it possible that the conventional myth merely serves as cover for a hidden parallel agenda? Contemplate the counsel of US Presidential cold-war policy advisor, George F. Kennan whose views in 1948 seem coldly resonant today:

"We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6% of its population... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task is to maintain this position of disparity without detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming. We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better..."

A bit hard-edged perhaps, but Kennan's words are unambiguous, fully transparent and provide a more revealing context for recent world history than anything the prevailing popular myth has to offer. Perhaps we should keep this in mind as Canada prepares to host the full meeting of the G8 in Kananaskis in June. Perhaps this time, instead of merely bashing the protesters, the popular media should give equal time to what they have to say.

WILLIAM E. REES PH. D.

(This is the full text of an essay from which an edited excerpt was recently called and published by the Toronto Star on April 22nd. This essay is reprinted with the permission of the author.)

LOVE AND LIFE

Their needs are simple. "We're just feeding ourselves in a concrete jungle – a very dirty concrete jungle."



Photo: Linda Dumont

With the coming of spring life has eased up for a homeless couple. "I feel as though my mind was asleep, and now I can think again," said Tony Heath. And his thoughts have turned to possibly finding employment, and even housing after being homeless since last summer when he and his wife, June Brown, hit Edmonton.

Tony and June were dropped off at West Edmonton Mall, July 10, 2001, after an eventful two days on the road hitchhiking from Vancouver. They were drawn here by the Alberta Advantage – the promise of employment. By the time they arrived, however, they were already at a distinct disadvantage. They had no possessions, no money and no identification. They had been robbed.

Tony and June left Vancouver with Tony's carpentry tools, their identification and \$1,000 cash in two large backpacks – everything they needed to make a new start. The first day, they walked twenty-five miles from Vancouver to Abbotsfield before hitching a ride with a half-ton truck. Tired with sore, blistered feet, they threw their backpacks into the box, and thankfully climbed in the cab. It was a short but costly ride. The driver let them out at Chilliwack where he turned off,

then sped away before they could retrieve their backpacks from the truck box.

"He was gone with everything we owned," Tony said. "He went around the corner in a shower of dust and gravel. We couldn't even read the license plate through the dust." Tony believes the driver picked them up with the intention of robbery.

Footsore and weary, they started walking again. A long distance trucker picked them up. He had seen them earlier and saw them still walking. He bought them meals, let them sleep in the double sleeper, and even gave them \$20.

In Edmonton, June checked into the Women's Emergency Accommodation Shelter, and Tony went to the Herb Jamieson Centre, a shelter for men. They had both been working on sobriety in Vancouver. Their first date was to an AA meeting after they met at a food bank, but living at the shelters, both started drinking again.

"We'd been sober for 18 months but it was around us all of the time," Tony said.

"We just don't do well when we're apart," June said.

After two weeks they left the shelters to live on the street. "We walked around with our motorless home (a shopping cart with

their accumulated belongings). Sometimes things got stolen while we slept, like our backpacks and glasses. We slept wherever we stopped. One day I was sleeping outside City Hall, and a security guard came out. She said I couldn't sleep there, but I told her I wasn't sleeping, I was meditating and she left me alone," Tony said.

In October, June and Tony woke up to find themselves covered with snow. It was time to seek indoor shelter. They managed to get a room at the Cromdale Hotel and with that as an address, to get onto Supports for Independence (welfare). The room wasn't fancy, there were no cooking facilities, the bathroom was down the hall, but it was warm and it was home.

Then disaster struck. November 15, June woke up with her hair ablaze. In a panic, she swatted out the flames with her bare hands, leaving them severely burned. Tony was passed out, but he woke up in time to see June being carried out on a stretcher by the firemen. June was hospitalized for more than a month, kept drugged on morphine for pain, and underwent painful skin grafts to repair the deep burns on the fingers of her right hand.

They were evicted from the Cromdale

because of the fire. June is still not sure just how it started because they had both been drinking, but she believes it was from lighted candles at the head of the bed. Homeless once more, Tony lived at the Herb Jamieson Centre and spent long hours at June's bedside, leaving only to go back for supper and to check in for the night.

"I signed myself out of the hospital," June said. "They didn't want me to go. When I left I still had open wounds on my hands and I didn't have a place to stay."

There followed a brief stay at the Grand Hotel before they were back on the street again.

June's dark hair has grown back and she still wears a special stretchy white glove to keep pressure on her hand. Fortunately, her face is unscarred. She still goes to the University Hospital for physiotherapy as an outpatient.

Their needs are simple. "We're just feeding ourselves in a concrete jungle – a very dirty concrete jungle," Tony said. They make a bit of money panhandling, occasionally sell Our Voice, and sometimes pick bottles, enough for smokes and drinks and a bit of spending money. Sometimes, panhandling pays well. One day Tony made \$60 in an hour. But other days, it's hard to make the price.

For showers, they stop at the Boyle McCauley Health Unit where towels, soap and shampoo are all supplied. There is no problem finding free food. In the morning they go to "The Breakfast Club" at St. Peter's Lutheran Church three times a week. It's a friendly place where they share breakfast with friends and acquaintances. Even some school children stop at St. Peter's before going on to McCauley and Sacred Heart Schools. Lunch is soup at The Mustard Seed or the Marian Centre, and supper at whatever place is serving an evening meal.

Tony said he would like to make a new start, but there are many obstacles. "In order to work, I need housing. They keep telling us to go back to the shelters, but we don't want to be separated. We've been really close for two years."

He also needs tools and identification. Even then, he is doubtful that he would be able to keep a job because he has a degenerative disc disease. And alcoholism is a major roadblock.

Recently, Tony and June moved into a new home – a condemned house in the inner city. "I'd like to find out who owns this place and see if we could fix it up for him," said Tony. In the meantime, the house provides shelter and privacy.

LINDA DUMONT



LIFE

Life is just one damned thing after another.

ELBERT HUBBARD

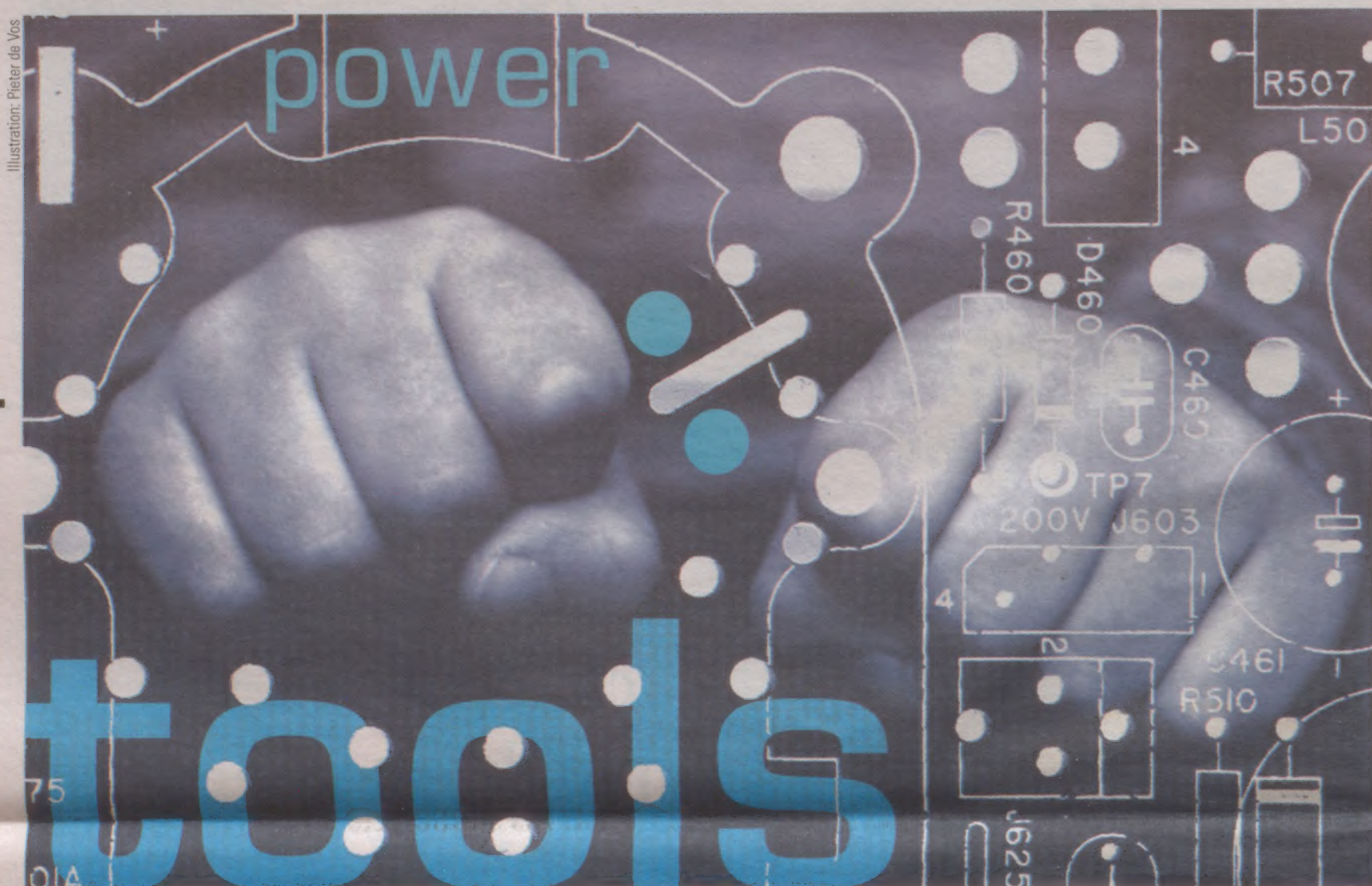
UNTYING THE KNOT

SPEECH OF HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS

T TOOLS

My own experience has been that the **tools** I need for my trade are paper, tobacco, food, and a little whisky.

WILLIAM FAULKNER



Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Speech of Hugo Chavez Frias

International
Conference on
Financing for
Development
Monterrey,
Mexico
March 21,
2002

From this stage, I have the privilege and the honor to address you all, the people of the world. I ask the leaders and representatives here united, that

we raise a cry to God for what Alfonso Reyes called "fixing the senses and untying the knot". I ask this from my position as a President of one of the "G-77 and China" countries, and especially in the name of all the poor in the world, not only one-and-a-half billion of absolute poor in the third and fourth world, but also the more than two hundred million poor people who live in the first and second world.

Many of them have some knowledge of this Summit even though I am sure that the large majority of them don't even know that we are here. Yet their luck and their life depend on what we have begun to debate here today.

The first idea has to do with necessity. I believe we all have to recognize, not only on paper, not only in words spoken or written, but also in the depth of our consciousness, that the world is not only twisted, it is something more than that. I will say, with Eduardo Galeano that "the world is inside-out"; that the world is upside-down and that not only the people but also God's world screams to God. We, the ones reunited, the leaders of the world, we can do much to make it straight.

The second idea has to do with that; we have to act, not only talk. The best scenario is one that involves leaders; representatives of states, national, and international governing bodies making real decisions to transform the world. I could say, to save the world, because the way the world is going is, in my opinion, not sustainable in the long run. We are destroying it.

Ten years ago "La Summit de La Tierra" (The Earth Summit), was held in Rio de Janeiro. The evaluations that have been

done in the last few years indicate that from that Summit up to this date, destruction of tropical forests has continued, destruction of fertile soils has continued - they are now

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deserts. More than two hundred thousand species of animals and plants have disappeared. The atmosphere continues to be polluted and contaminated; the climate is suf-

fering the most treacherous changes it has experienced in the last ten years. This is how the scientists see it.

The Millennium Summit happened a year-and-a-half ago. We subscribed a Declaration there. We have to ask, a year and half later, what have we done? The noble agenda that we established for the year 2015 required that we reduce poverty to half, that all children have free education, the right to live, and the right to health. Have we made transcendental decisions in 1.5 years? We haven't seen them anywhere. The true decisions that will change the world have not happened.

The third idea we talked about is Financial Development. What kind of development are we discussing? We have to define this opportunity in the Summit of Johannesburg [World Summit on Sustainable Development, August 26 - September 4, 2002] because many times the model of development from the north has been the cause of sub-development in the south. It has been demonstrated, for example, if all habitants in the world acquired the standard of living of the developed countries; we would require ten more similar planets in order to sustain human life. Therefore, it is essential that we define where we are going and what kind of development we are talking about. What are we going to finance? What are we going to develop?

The Program of Development of the United Nations is a marvelous instrument. We recommend that government authorities, and the authorities of state follow it with diligence. This is the development that we have to finance with urgency: human

development.

The Program of Development of the United Nations established with precision three fundamental conditions for human development. First, hope of life and health. Second, education, school registration and quality of education. Third, real family income. These are three conditions that we have to work for right now, not tomorrow!

The fourth idea that I want to leave here is a question. What are we going to do? There are some positive ideas in the "Consensus of Monterrey", but we have to give it a vision of time and space. We have to begin with the most urgent priorities. We recommended from Venezuela, in the Summit of the Millennium and the Summit of the Americas that a state of social emergency be declared.

We must recognize that the world is in a critical social emergency. It is necessary to declare it and act accordingly. I would like to propose that the International Monetary Fund is not the necessary tool for this battle for the life of billions of people. No, the IMF was not born for that.

I propose to discuss urgently the creation of new tools. Why not an International Humanitarian Fund? We will have to change only a few letters - "M" of "Monetary" for "H" of "Humanitarian". How will we feed this International Humanitarian Fund? It could be a percentage of the external debt. We need to make these decisions right now! It is not about the alleviation of the debt. No, those are small hot towels applied to the lethal illness afflicting the poor people of our planet.

Ten percent of the external debt of the developing world, of the world of the poor, can be directed at this moment to salvage thousands of millions of lives. Ten percent of the military expenses of the world will save thousands of millions of people. If it only stopped the construction of war tanks, airplanes and intelligent bombs, we could save many lives at this very moment. Other funding options could come from a percentage of the profits confiscated from the traffic in narcotics, and something very important that we have been debating but have never decided on: a world tax for the speculative transactions and fiscal paradises that exist on our planet.

We have been asked that each country take a national initiative to mobilize resources for development. There are countries in this world in which more than five hundred million people do not have the ability to mobilize a cent for development. That is a reality we have in this world.

Certainly, for many countries in the world, the external debt is unpayable. Venezuela has paid in three years thirteen billion dollars. Despite our poverty and our disasters we are paying the debt that we assumed but it is not the same for other countries in the world.

The South has paid to the North in the last few years, eight hundred billion dollars in interest and in capital, eight hundred billion more and the debt is still the same. It hasn't decreased; in fact it has increased. It is a strange monster, the debt. We pay and pay and it doesn't decrease, but it continues to increase.

Therefore, I present all these ideas in the name of the people from the south. I have been privileged and I am grateful to give these words of criticism, to look for the consensus inside the differences and to march all of us with the spirit of Monterrey, with the spirit of Mexico, with the spirit of justice, with the spirit of Simon Bolivar. Let us make justice triumph and liberty will triumph.

Excerpts translated from the original Spanish for Our Voice by DELMY GARCIA-HOYT

WITHSTANDING THE COUP D'ETAT

For those who watch CNN or Fox News, the most important stories on Saturday, April 13th, other than sports of course, were the 90th anniversary of the Titanic, along with an auction of Jerry Garcia's guitar, Colin Powell's trip to Israel and perhaps you caught Al Gore's speech on C-Span2. Worthy stories all, but nothing was broadcast live from one of the most dramatic stories of the year - the coup and counter-coup in Venezuela.

For those unfamiliar with the place, a quick recap. Venezuela is a country approximately the size of Texas, whose economy relies on being an oil exporter. A member of OPEC and trade partner of the US, it has been burdened for decades by the problems that many resource economies have. Oil is the only real source of foreign currency, and it is a vast river of corruption which is controlled by a few families. The lower classes are trapped in crushing rent-poverty, the cities plagued by very high crime, and it has a political class which has traditionally allied with whoever offered the most effective way to pillage the people and extract bribes.

In 1998, former paratrooper - and attempted coup leader - Hugo Chavez was swept to power with a constitutional mandate in the Assembly to change society. His methods were a brusque implementation of a socialist agenda, including gaining a grant of sweeping powers from the National Assembly, flirting with Cuba and Iraq as potential allies, and arranging a reduction in oil production that OPEC has followed over the last two years - producing just enough oil, but not too much. His plan was to tax oil revenues and spend the money on reviving the rest of the economy, developing the rest of the society, and breaking up the huge estates, left over from Spanish colonialism two centuries ago.

Chavez implemented a new constitution, renamed the country the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" after liberator Simon Bolivar, and used near-decree rule to put forward his economic plan. His failures proliferated - he was unable to root out corruption in his own party, he was unable to stop the crime, he was unable to push through key reforms. Even though he was given a mandate under the new constitution, his popularity plummeted. Part of his problem was entrenched resistance to change, which centered in the families holding the power in the media, and the oil unions whose members knew that they would no longer be the only well-paid workers in a cheap economy.

In the last few months, as oil prices drifted and his attempt to tax the oil revenues stalled, the reactionary forces against him began executing a bold plan - constant media harassment, including outright lies and constant repetition of one-sided stories, combined with a strike by the oil unions which hobbled the economy.

On April 10th, the reactionaries organized a "general" strike - which was honored only by those loyal to the oil companies, and a massive demonstration in Caracas. Chavez' number seemed to be up; while his opponents offered nothing, he still had little to rebut their charges with.

Then, the demonstrations took a violent turn; the demonstrators marched on the presidential palace and began throwing

rocks - they were met with tear gas and armed National Guard units loyal to Chavez and Metropolitan police loyal to his political allies. During the escalating violence, gunmen from the revolutionary Bandera Roja fired from sniper positions at both Guardsmen and demonstrators - 13 were killed, including both demonstrators and Chavistas. The media corporations - aligned with the coup - ran a tight loop only of the protesters being shot, and claimed that the National Guard had fired first.

A carefully orchestrated coup began, with a council of the country's top businessmen, backed by reactionary elements, most importantly General Efraim Vasquez, who said that he was taking over as head of the armed forces. Right-wing economist Pedro Carmona, head of Fedecamera, the league of the country's largest corporations, declared himself the new president. Also involved in the coup were Army General Roman Fuemayor, who orchestrated the

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capture of President Chavez, Finance Minister (and General) Francisco Uson, and National Guard chief Luis Camacho Kairuz, who commanded the troops that fired at the demonstrators. Allegations have surfaced that it was Kairuz who was behind the Guard troops' murderous reaction - and no one other than the US Government has alleged that Chavez himself gave the order.

The new president was immediately recognized by the IMF and the United States, which issued a statement blaming Chavez almost before the dust settled. The junta attempted to roll back the democratic revolution - it renamed the country, dissolved the legislature, fired the Supreme Court, sent out orders to purge the military and opened the PDVS, the petroleum monopoly, to selling drilling rights to foreign companies. The price of oil on world markets dropped.

Almost in unison, major media outlets in the English-speaking world condemned Chavez and praised the coup. George Bush

stated that now there would be "tranquility and democracy".

It seemed a fait accompli, but it is at this moment that Chavez' policies began paying dividends. First, his supporters in the slums of Caracas and elsewhere were told of a different version of events, and, with a literacy rate that has tripled in the last 6 years, they could read that story.

Within two days, a march on the presidential palace was organized, and was also on the coup-supporting television stations. A civilian Metropolitan Police drove away the private security forces that the media companies had hired - El Universal admitted as much on the night of the 13th. The improved phone and communications infrastructure enabled word to spread throughout the country, and several military commanders refused to recognize the junta, saying that it violated the constitution.

The junta's plans began unraveling further when the Interior Minister - who they accused of being the man who gave the orders to shoot - escaped a lynch mob that they had organized. The National Assembly reconvened in the liberated presidential palace, swore in Chavez' vice-president as an interim president "until the president is returned", and sent the National Guard to detain Cremona and other junta members.

Cremona resigned when faced with the Constitutionalist forces - as El Universal named them in a derogatory gesture - and the rest of the coup plotters surrendered or melted away. Chavez was released early on the 14th. He immediately issued a strong statement, but with conciliatory overtones. He stated that he would make changes in his methods, and he also told his followers to make no reprisals - the coup plotters would be tried according to the law.

Chavez still has monumental challenges before him, and he will have to learn from past failures if he is to remain with a mandate - his popularity hovered around 35% for weeks before the attempted coup, and he does not have much time to show concrete progress. The events of the last few days illustrate the hardcore, anti-constitutional opposition that faces him: An opposition backed by the US, and perhaps more than just backed by the US; an opposition that has control of the media, and has not hesitated to use murder and kidnapping to attain its ends.

So there the situation stands - a successful counter-coup in the face of an oil-media conspiracy to seize power, overturn the constitution and roll back social reforms, backed by the Bush family. A democratically elected government has been restored, albeit one chastened by its close brush with death.

However, for those who have read events closely, the current US government's eagerness to back a coup, and its labeling of a corporate-military coup as "tranquility and democracy" (in George Bush's own words) should raise alarms. It is doubtful that Venezuela under Chavez will see the United States as the beacon of Democracy and the Rule of Law that some like to portray. It is also doubtful that he will be inclined to ease up on his policy of forcing oil prices higher - especially given the huge debt he inherited from the previous corrupt Venezuelan governments. It is also unlikely that OPEC, having been stung by US non-intervention in Israel, threats made against some of its member governments, and having had one of its own the target of a pro-US corporate coup, will think kindly of US interests when they next meet.

STALING NEWBEARY

Sources for this report include the Financial Times of London, El Universal of Caracas, members of the Government of Venezuela who remained loyal to Chavez, and other sources in Caracas and the economic community

P PROTEST

The individual protests against the world, but he doesn't get beyond protest, he is just a single protester. When he wants to be more than that, he has to counter power with power, he has to oppose the system with another system.

FRIEDRICH DURRENMATT



THE COUNTERCONFERENCE

Edmonton based non-governmental organization, ISPHR, (International Society for Peace and Human Rights) has developed an alternative forum to the G8 Conference being held in late June in Kananaskis. Called the G6B (or group of six billion, representing the global population), it is a conference offering an alternative view of the planet's future: "One which is not rooted in increased militarism and poverty and decreased human and civil rights. Committed to bridging the divides and inequalities that exist between the developed and developing world, the conference will bring forward recommendations in six theme areas: trade and economy, human security, health, education, environment, democracy and governance."

The G6B, being held at the University of Calgary, June 21-25 has a coalition of NGO's including Amnesty International, the Canadian Labor Congress, RESULTS, Sierra Club and many others. The Conference brings renowned speakers, respected experts, and activists from the front lines of poverty and conflict together with an anticipated audience of 500, to explore a number of crucial issues and recommendations within the G6B's six themes.

Speaking to Our Voice about the conference is Saren Azer, a well-educated and gentle man with a PhD in pulmonary medicine. Being Kurdish and experiencing first hand human rights violations in his homeland, Azer knows all too well what it is like to be vulnerable to a wide range of horrors. When not working with ISPHR, Saren works at the U of A's Department of Pulmonary Medicine.

How did the G6B come about?

Saren Azer: It has become a tradition in the activist community whenever there is any

gathering of the major world institutions, article institutions or superpowers, there are certain activists who try to offer an alternative view of the world. So when we heard that the G8 countries were going to meet in Kananaskis we knew it was necessary for activists from all over the globe to come together and send a strong and powerful message to the world and to the G8 countries that there are alternative ways to manage the world and there are certain important issues that have to come into consideration of these powers.

It seems like non-economic issues are not even on their agenda...

S.A.: And of course it is clear that the issues that are of the most importance to them have mostly to do with their own financial and economic well-being, while the world issues are not of much significant importance for them. So the G6B was predominately put forward in the hope that it could really bring some light to the real and serious issues at this time that are not of much interest, perhaps, to G8 countries.

Who came up with the actual idea behind the counter-conference?

S.A. It was a group idea to highlight that decisions for this planet should be shared by all the population of this planet. We should highlight that it is not democratic and it's not appropriate for eight individuals to make decisions for the globe.

Tell me about the agenda.

S.A. We are trying really to give a global and holistic perspective of real issues. We have workshops involved with all the relevant issues: environment, human rights, economy and trade, security, globalization, spatiality and religious harmony. All these issues are going to be discussed. We are hoping that we could come out of this reactionary phase and let the world know that we are not just reacting to the movement of the globalization forces, that we do have an alternative, solid, sustainable way for human civilization. This is the foundation of the conference, really. To deliver this message of oneness and message of alternative sustainable approaches to human civilization.

Which workshops are you specifically going to be taking part in?

S.A. I have been in charge of the health committee and am organizing the health workshops. As I mentioned there are more than 10 different workshops. We are trying to identify the current existing issues, problems and obstacles of global health and to identify alternatives of how we can solve these problems.

I imagine that most of the problems are economically based.

S.A. Yes. For example we are going to have extensive discussion around the issue of HIV in the world and specifically in Africa. There are going to be intense dis-

cussions around the issue of water and water safety and sanitation. There are going to be discussions around the global privatization of health care, and how the privatization of health has affected the collective well-being. So these issues are going to be discussed among experts from all over the world and alternatives and solutions will be summarized in position papers that we hope to submit to the G8 countries.

So someone will bring those conclusions to the G8 conference?

S.A. This is what we are hoping to do. We are hoping to let them know that this is how the world wants to be; this is how the people think these issues should be addressed. We know that the G8 have their own specific ways of addressing issues. We know that on top of their agenda is their own economy and financial well-being and this is a top priority, but we believe that the world envisions the situation differently. I think human life, collective well-being and the environment has to come first and come prior to profit, and this is the message of G6B. More than profit, there have to be other priorities like sustainability, the protection of environment.

I was disgusted with the fact that the pre-G8 environmental conference in Kananaskis with Minister David Anderson did not even include Climate Change on the agenda for discussion until the other ministers forced it on the table.

S.A. (At the G6B) there is going to be an entire workshop regarding the environment and these issues with experts, very high profile individuals from all over the world who will address these issues. Issues like how we can sustain and maintain our environment are, in our eyes, of extreme importance. We believe that the corporate and superpower agenda has not really engaged the protection of the environment and we hope to use this opportunity of G6B to try to address some of the crucial issues.

For more info on attending the conference or even being a part of it, where would a person inquire?

S.A. If we could ask for people's participation we are in need of volunteers. It is an extremely large conference with representatives from several countries who will be there. We believe that only when citizens participate, could the change become real. Volunteers can help with the issues and workshops they are interested in. Go to our website at www.peaceandhumanrights.org or phone Lynn Foster at (403) 202-0638. It's a great opportunity to take part in shaping history, collaborating, working together and hopefully contributing to the well-being of the planet.

DALE LADOUCEUR

For more information go to www.peaceandhumanrights.org or phone Lynn Foster at (403) 202-0638.

G8 DEBATE

"We, the Environment Ministers of the eight major industrialized countries, and the European Commissioner responsible for the Environment, met in Banff, Canada, from April 12 to 14, 2002 to discuss environment and development, environment and health and environmental governance. Our goal in Banff was to advance preparations for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 26 to September 4, 2002."

This is how the G8 Environment Ministers statement begins and it continues as such for 14 long paragraphs. The single most striking thing about the official statement is the lack of the word "conservation". "Sustainable Development", something far different than "conservation", appears 23 times, "conservation" appears only once. And, in spite of host Minister David Anderson's attempts to keep it out altogether, "climate change" appears once as well.

The leaked document, appearing on the Council of Canadians website, (www.canadians.org), shows how the environment ministers are in support of the corporate trade agenda of the WTO. "It is pathetic to see that the G8 environment ministers are planning to subordinate the world's environment to corporate globalization," said Maude Barlow, Chair of the Council of Canadians.

It is hard to ignore the bias towards industry throughout the document. Statements such as "The WSSD, (World Summit on Sustainable Development), must build upon the active engagement of all stake holders. Sustainable development benefits everyone..." can only be met with a raised eyebrow to those without a vested interest in industrial-based globalization.

Under the mutually exclusive heading "Environment and Development", it starts with the statement "Better integration of the environmental dimension into economic and social development policies remains a chal-

lenge and is crucial for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals..." The document continues on from there as if it were from the pages of a CEO's speech to its shareholders.

"Every time trade agreements address environmental issues, the environment loses out," says David Robbins, Trade Campaigner for the Council of Canadians. "This is a very bad sign for the future of the planet. The G8 is working through the Quad of the WTO to limit governments' ability to protect the environment."

If our Federal government was really behind signing the Kyoto Protocol they would have been promoting it at the G8 Environment Minister's meeting in Banff. In fact, quite the opposite occurred. The Environment Minister from the EU, using the media to embarrass Minister Anderson, forced climate change onto the meeting's agenda.

Originally Prime Minister Chretien seemed to be behind ratification of Kyoto. So why the change? Well, it started in early February when Premier Ralph Klein hi-jacked the microphone away from Chretien at a minister's meeting, presenting him with a letter that "most of the Premiers" signed. According to Klein, the ministers were "airing concerns" on the potential economic impact of the Kyoto Accord.

The letter, dated February 12, 2002 and signed by BC Premier Gordon Campbell, reads nearly identical to a 39 page, February 2002 document put out by the Alberta Government titled "Albertans and Climate Change: A Strategy for Managing Environmental and Economic Risks."

The Campbell/select Ministers' letter reads: "We all recognize and agree that climate change is a global concern for all Canadians, and that action must be taken to address the issue." The AB Government document reads: "Alberta recognizes and strongly agrees that climate change is a growing concern to all Canadians, and there is no question that some

action must be taken to address the issue."

Although the Ministers' letter to Chretien is signed by Gordon Campbell, Klein is the real author. The letter reads: "My colleagues and I have identified the following principles to guide our action on climate change." But the principles are taken directly from a 1998 Alberta Cabinet announcement on climate change strategy. Word for word, the principles are:

1. A shared understanding by all provinces and territories of the range of real costs of the Kyoto Protocol.
2. Informed consultation with engaged stakeholders and our publics.
3. Our climate change response does not put Canada at a competitive disadvantage.
4. Governments must work collaboratively, ensuring respect for provincial as well as federal jurisdictional responsibilities.
5. No province or territory should be asked to bear an unreasonable share of the burden.
6. No industry sector or region will be treated unfairly.
7. In the short term, Industry should be encouraged to use new technology reducing emissions intensity. For the longer term, we need investment in technologies that break the relationship between emissions and economic growth.
8. All Canadians must be part of the climate change solution.
9. A need to focus on energy conservation and efficiency, and public education. (The AB document did not include public education.)

So here we have the majority of Canada's Environment Ministers adopting Premier Klein's position on climate change—a position that has coincidentally grown stronger with the release of President George W. Bush's controversial Clear Skies initiative on climate change. Both are oilmen who listen far more to industry than to their constituents. Clear Skies was written with the help of 52 members of industry and only one environmental biologist.

Klein believes there should be a National Plan and wants Alberta to "...work cooperatively with the federal government..." to develop that plan. A national plan would be good for federal standards on protection and conservation of threatened species and places. Unfortunately, this is quite a different plan than Klein outlines in the Albertan's and Climate Change document.

Klein's National Plan would: "Allow Alberta to retain control over this issue and consequently control over our resource development. Limit the costs, liability and competitiveness risk for Canada's private sector. Minimize the costs to Albertans and the economy as a whole through efficient solutions and limited liability. (and) Incorporate an agreed upon set of principles that produce real greenhouse gas reductions, and mutually agreed upon outcomes."

Some of that sounded good but the emphasis on liability, (and the lack thereof), has the potential to protect industry and its actions. What is needed is for all governments, from federal to municipal, to listen to unbiased, non-corporate-owned science and look beyond the sphere of their political tenure. Investing in conservation and protection of the environment now will cost a lot less than severe weather and massive crop failures later.

DALE LADOUCEUR

ENVIRONMENT E

The neo-hippie-dips, the sentimentality-crazed iguana anthropomorphizers, the Chicken Littles, the three-bong-hit William Blakes—thank God these people don't actually go outdoors much, or the **environment** would be even worse than it is already.

P.J. O'Rourke



Photo: Pieter de Vos

WE GOT YOU HOOKED!



H HOOK

I can't accept "our nervous age," since mankind has been nervous during every age. Whoever fears nervousness should turn into a sturgeon or smelt; if a sturgeon makes a stupid mistake, it can only be one: to end up on a **hook**, and then in a pan in a pastry shell.

ANTON PAVLOVICH
CHEKHOV

Thanks to everyone who responded to last month's fish contest. We enjoyed reading your answers. Congratulations to Daniel Monroe for landing the big one: a \$50 gift certificate to Thomas' Fisherman's Grotto.

The Winner!

It is undeniable the symbolic meaning of fish as a metaphor of life, of the human experience. The fish does not struggle with any such notions that we as a society do; he simply lives. Birds fly, fish swim. It's so simple. And we as a society, as a species, have been honored and privileged to learn the simple lesson from our brother.

Throughout the world we see examples of the fish. In literature, the writings of sacred texts, be they Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Native, Bahai; all faiths, one truth. The Buddhists respect all life including the fish. The Christians with Jesus feeding the multitudes and having within the ranks of apostles, fishermen.

In practical terms, the fish gives her flesh to many so that the wheel of life may continue turning, the lessons learned.

After my gut reaction to your question a wonderful series of events occurred. The phone rang, Michelle's (my partner) father had returned from a fishing trip. He wished to share a fillet of jackfish taken from Wabasca Lake, north of Slave Lake. The jackfish weighed 13 pounds, the fillet was huge, the meat white and firm, delicious the taste, pure. What a treat, what an honor, what a mystery.

How ironic the situation I thought. The phone call and gift, the Our Voice contest, the holy Christian time (Good Friday/Easter). These three events coupled with my own belief in a trinity (a mind,

body, spirit) existence. Coincidence, Karma, synchronicity, fate? Who can say? Birds fly, fish swim, it's so simple.

I spoke to people asking their opinions and thoughts about the "idea" of fish. The ideas and opinions for me personally lacked depth. No serious appreciation. One individual was quite thoughtful however. The message based in Christian values rang true as they do coming from those who see the message written between the lines, yet still lacking a Universality to make "All" inclusive.

And what I found occurring within my self during these external discourses was an awareness, a consciousness, a contemplation of your question, Pieter.

It is said a shark seldom stops moving or it will die (no oxygenated water over his gills). So too is the salmon's life one of perpetual motion and then what? What happens to that life force? Does it stop moving? All life is in movement, ceaselessly moving forward upward, outward—much like the thoughts and ideas moving along the words I've written to you today.

This is the notion I believe which lies at the base of your question.

And now finally my own response to this challenge.

What a great exercise in thought this subject of yours has provoked—so strongly that I have stroked pen across paper.

A flower moves through life not struggling to define itself as something it is not. The flower simply is a flower. We, as a people, have been given a wonderful opportunity, a gift. What will we do with this gift of life? I struggle with that question. Now that is an intellectual struggle, but by bearing witness to all my brothers and sisters around me, particularly rocks, trees, and fish an important lesson can be gleaned.

They, in their physical bodies move through the physical environment; the grace and dignity masking the struggle. I wish to emulate the mountain, the forest, the swimmer. I am in Inuit Atanarquat—the fast runner.

I saw this powerful move and it is now part of my identity like the story of the salmon.

These intellectual endeavors, coupled with an inborn, compulsive desire to run, not always knowing where I am going but

feeling the satisfaction of being on the path create a sense of harmony. It is in the realm of harmony that peace prevails and allows the voice of my spirit-soul to be heard. This voice will keep me humble, dutiful, principled. It is so simple.

DANIEL MONROE

Runner-ups!

Fish! Why would Pieter use fish as a visual center for Our Voice? It could be that if you have a fish bowl with gold fish and you feed them, keep the bowl and water clean, they will survive forever. If you take care of them they will give back to you peace and relaxation. They are survivors like ourselves. Fish come in all shapes, sizes and colors, same as people. We see beauty in them as we see beauty in people. But not all fish are beautiful, the same as us. Fish have a purpose in life just like us. Fish can be fooled into biting a hook or getting tangled in a net. People are the same, we get fooled by the bait of drugs and alcohol. Fortunately some fish are released to continue with life, and so are people. They are untangled from the net and start life over. What I'm saying is: "Fish and people have a lot in common." Using fish as a visual center for Our Voice is a great idea. It gives us a chance to take a look at ourselves, at what we are. Are we fish or people?

BETTY NORDIN

Once again I've enjoyed reading your publication and in the spirit of this month's theme, I HOPE that I know why a fish motif has been used. My answer is two pronged, involving the Church World Service's Tools of Hope, and the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu.

First prong: Bolivians living in a mountainous area where the land couldn't provide enough nutrition to support the people were helped by the Church World Service's Tools of Hope program. The hope was provided by stocking lagoons with fish. The stocks grew, and now provide nutrition for the people, and a source of income.

Second prong: Chinese philosopher Lao

Tzu is credited with the quote "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

I'm hoping that the above is what Mr. de Vos was thinking when he chose this month's fish motif, but as most people know, two prongs don't make a right.

STUART BANHAM

The early Christians under persecution for their beliefs used the fish as a symbol to identify themselves to each other in their belief in a new life in Christ. The early church brought new hope for oppressed peoples; therefore the fish that they chose as a symbol of this faith stands for hope.

JAKE

p.s. I hope I'm not just fishin' for fifty bucks here, but you dangled the right bait.

When I gazed into my crystal ball, filled with hopes for a flash of mystical insight into the deeper, hidden, symbolic meaning about the Voice of Hope ... I was amazed to see its murky depths flashing the phosphorescent colors of tropical deep sea fish ...and I realized that an image of this month's cover had been etched into my permanent memory as yet another distraction to interfere with prayer & meditation ... probably when the setting sun blazed down upon my wind-burned face as it gazed up at the antiquated clock tower of the old Southside post office that is now irreverently referred to as Chianti's by one and all ... and my mind was whirling in high gear as it calculated the ratio of the current day's predictable of donations barometer against the mood of vendor index as cross-checked with the pedestrian travel altimeter to determine as near as possible the probable time elapse that had to occur before receiving my next hoped-for paper sale ... and now all I could see was a whole school of fish whenever I closed my eyes ... but wait ... a school is where people learn ... and it is through education that the despair of the burden of poverty is lifted ... and it is hope that nurtures the soul ... and since the parable claims that one fish became many and the crowds were not hungry ... then does not the cover tell us to have faith that hope shall sustain us ... that, in symbolic reflection of the resurrection, that after despair follows the hope, that after the darkness follows the light ... that with work and diligence and understanding we can overcome our limitations to enjoy the spiritual freedoms of promise ... that as surely as a fish floats in the water, then we can survive and flourish with hope ... unless of course we decide to "flounder" instead ... and so doesn't it follow that if one has the ethereal fish of hope to succor them then they always travel in a path or school of learning that sustains them and if they always seek the path of truth then they have the hope that uplifts them.

There, I either touched the elusive concept of Alpha-Omega or ensnared myself in a trap of circular reasoning. You're right, the mind of P.F. de Vos is definitely obscure.

MISTY

p.s. I noticed my crystal ball was flawed so I threw it out right after I had this illumination.



A Closer Look

When you look downtown you see big buildings with offices, lots of cars and people traveling to and from work. Take a closer look. Take away the big buildings, the cars and the people who go to work. Take a look at the small buildings, the alleys, and the people who don't drive cars and who don't work. Take a closer look at the people who don't have a place to call home or regular meals

My name is Amanda and I am a second year student at Grant MacEwan College. My practicum placement was at the Bissell Center and the Boyle Street Co-op. I spent 7 weeks starting March 1st and ending April 25th alternating between these two facilities.

It's funny because I didn't get the placement I was hoping for. I didn't know what the Bissell Center was and I had never heard of the Boyle Street Co-op. So you can imagine

my first day was a little bit scary; I had no clue I would be working at two inner-city agencies. In fact, after the first day I thought to myself: "How am I going to survive these 7 weeks?"

I realized after my first week I have never really had it "that bad". I suppose I have been more fortunate. After working that one week I would go home for dinner and while I was eating I thought of the people who stand in line for donated food. I thought to myself: "I don't have to do that, why do they?" I even felt guilty bringing a lunch to work. It's true that your surroundings affect the way you feel and think and sometimes even the way you act.

These people are the homeless or perhaps they suffer from a mental illness. They could be users of drugs, alcoholics, runaways or even former alcoholics or substance users on the road to recovery.

In my fourth week at the Bissell Centre and the Boyle Street Co-op I realized a change in myself and how I responded to the people who approached me. I wasn't afraid of them anymore. I guess I felt like an outcast in the beginning; that I didn't belong. I think I noticed this change because I felt like they accepted me and didn't judge me. I dressed differently then they did, I didn't look like them and I couldn't really relate to their lives. They could have given me a hard time, but I think they were as interested in me as I was in them.

I think that I have learned to respect the poor and all of the hardships that they have had to endure. I think I have learned to replace my prejudice against them into a sympathetic and empathetic perspective. I have learned to appreciate what I have been blessed with in my family and the support that they offered me throughout my life. I appreciate having a hot meal and a warm place to sleep at night. I am thankful that I am able to have a hot shower and a clean set of clothes to put on everyday. These are basic needs that everyone I know is able to meet, everyone I know has these things and I'm sure they, just like I, take them for granted. My eyes have been opened up to a world I was blind to see. I suppose I didn't really care about the poor because I had never met a poor person. I'm the type of person who can't love something I can't see, I can't hear and I can't touch. But when a person like me is exposed and all of my senses have been affected my emotions and actions tell me that I do care now and that something needs to be done.

AMANDA

PERSPECTIVE

The fact that illness is associated with the poor—who are, from the **perspective** of the privileged, aliens in one's midst—reinforces the association of illness with the foreign: with an exotic, often primitive place.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH



Iwanted more than anything in the whole wide world to do an advice column for the Our Voice Magazine. I went to their writer's meetings for six months and finally the editor told me it had been decided that I would be given a chance. I was thrilled, excited, utterly grateful, and wholly motivated. I soon realized that if I wanted letters I was going to have to go after them myself, so I hit Whyte Ave, and befriended the blend of homeless, young and sexually vulnerable, oddly dressed and frequently filthy, "street kids," although they were full of the genuine, fresh, sincere energy, and healthy hearts and minds that young people emanate. I won their trust and got them to give me letters. My column ran for several months. I became way to skinny; overworking, I guess they call it.

I ended up spending a total of eight weeks in the psych ward of the Grey Nuns Hospital, two weeks in August and all of Indian Summer, too, for my second stint, which was six awful weeks. I felt like a

caged beast. I hated the side effects of their pills, their thick-headedness and the completely hopeless frustration of being very decisively "locked up."

But when I first arrived that September, I was shocked at how skeletal I'd become. My cheekbones were sticking out so far they scared me. My tongue had a deep, bleeding crack down the center of it from Vitamin C deficiency. I proceeded to devour all the meals they served me, take a nice big fat Vitamin C pill every morning, and gain back all the weight I'd lost and needed. Thank you, Grey Nuns.

However, when I finally got out, my precious column was dead and I had no place to live, because while I was locked up in August someone I won't name was responsible for a huge and hideous theft from my roommate's and my home, of almost five thousand dollars' worth of hard-earned property, including all of my incredible collection of gold, silver, and "stone" jewelry, my Canon camera, clothing, stereo and TV systems, and so on.

I found housing and have spent this whole winter rotting in a dinky apartment, blimping out and watching TV. It's been horrible. I've exiled myself from myself for protection from the enormous ocean of pain, heartbreak, agonizing loneliness and fear I carry around inside me. I know that "emotional eating" is self-destructive behavior, but that didn't stop me. It was better than losing control and going back to the Nuns'.

DQ blizzards and bulk chocolate macaroons take way the loneliness and numb some of the pain, and let's not even mention Pillsbury "bake-them-yourself" chocolate chunk cookies or McDonald's 3-for-\$1.06 choc chip cookies either. I built a vast, impenetrable fortress of ice and concrete around my heart so that I would never have to go back to hospital again.

Before being locked up at the Nuns', I'd woken up virtually every morning crying for about two years. I'd sob till my face was soaked and my ears were full of tears, and then I'd get bored and decide

to get up and make something out of my day. I'd have agonizing headaches and insomnia for up to five days straight sometimes. There was no staunching the tidal waves of tears or terrifying lava earthquakes that would erupt spontaneously from within myself, from the abandonment issues I was born to this earth with. All I could do with myself was whatever I could figure out was the best plan and fight to make something positive happen.

While in hospital I met many others who were so much worse off than I am—people disfigured for life, and botched suicide attempts. Somehow, when I was discharged, I couldn't cry anymore. Every time I felt the least bit sorry for myself, I'd think for two seconds about a person or two I'd met in there, and no tears ever came. I'd lost my beautiful rental home in Bonnie Doon, all my beautiful treasured jewelry, and my beloved, "Help Me Rhonda" column. I didn't cry once for six-and-a-half months.

So here we are today. All of us, together. Mother Earth in Edmonton, famous home of killer six-month winters has blessed us with something akin to spring. I've been back on my bicycle for two days now, and can feel the power and freedom flowing back into me. (I'm also on a diet.) Because I've chosen to open up and write my story I've had a lot of physical pain, crying, insomnia and headaches for three days, but I think the price was worth the struggle. I hope all of you who have managed to read this liked it. I love you and appreciate the attention of each of you. Thank you.

RHONDA SUMMERS

POETRY:

In memory of Gail Flett, who was born in 1967 and passed away in April 2002. Our thoughts are with you.

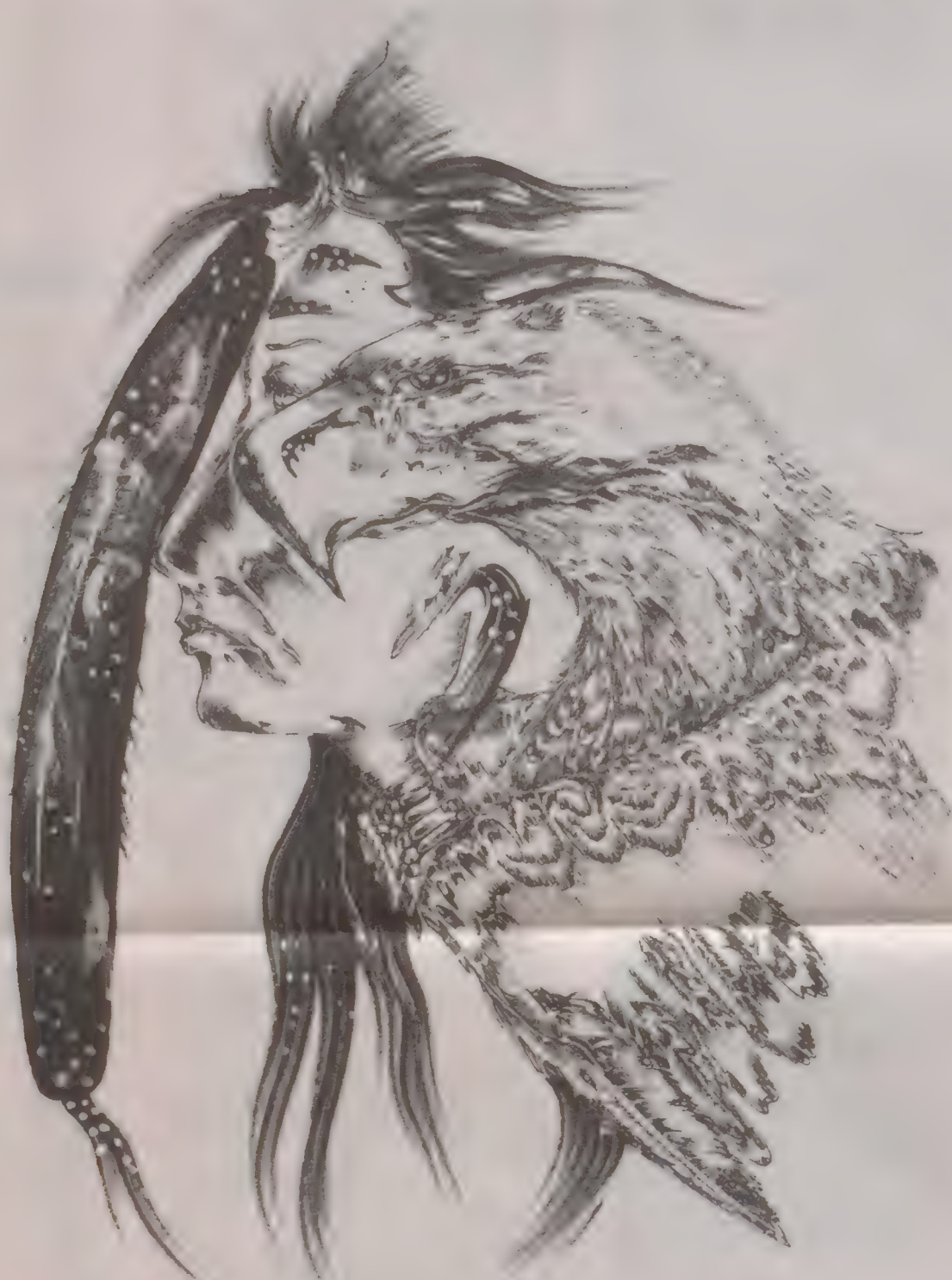


Illustration: Cano St. Savard

A Poem fades away each word
I write for you only one word
I forgot to say to you was how
much I love you now it stops raining
now my tears drop harder than rain
now each tear flows with sadness
now you are gone but never leaving
my heart. Your spirit flies free never
leaving your love wherever you're
love goes I'll follow sending my love
for you. You're a friend in my heart
with lots of love for you as you
gave with your loving heart for us
forever. Your eyes look down on us
gentle and free with your love shining
on us as for you my friend forever.

Lord hear my prayer
She will never leave our hearts
with lots of love in our hearts
with love, for you
my loving friend Gail Flett

Love Forever

CANO ST. SAVARD

Gail,
May the Great
Spirit be with
you. Rest in
Peace.

A Tree in the Forest

As seasons change, so do we. To change is to grow - to grow stronger or to grow more weakly - to grow wiser or to grow more foolish. To cease growing is to cease living. Whenever a tree or a flower or even a blade of grass stops growing, it begins to die. Each of us is born so that we may experience living. Each of us has the right to exercise our own choice - our free will - about how we interact with that experience of living. Just like a tree, we may choose to grow bent and gnarled and twisted or choose instead to grow tall and straight and firm. Like a tree, we may choose to house all kinds of worms and insects that others can feed from or we may choose to remain parasite-free and live out our time undisturbed by what others want us to be. Regardless of our circumstances in life, each of us has the choice to be as resilient as a tree. We can dig-in and hold-on tightly to the positive things that truly nurture us - to seek our own paths of authentic existence - to reach towards our own individual potentials. Or, like mindless husks that once housed seeds, we can give-up and drop out of reality - stranded, stuck or drifting aimlessly - avoiding responsibility - avoiding opportunity. We can learn to grow or we can wither and die. The choice is ours alone - and neither way is easy. But oh, I do so enjoy the beauty and shade of a tree!

Estrangement

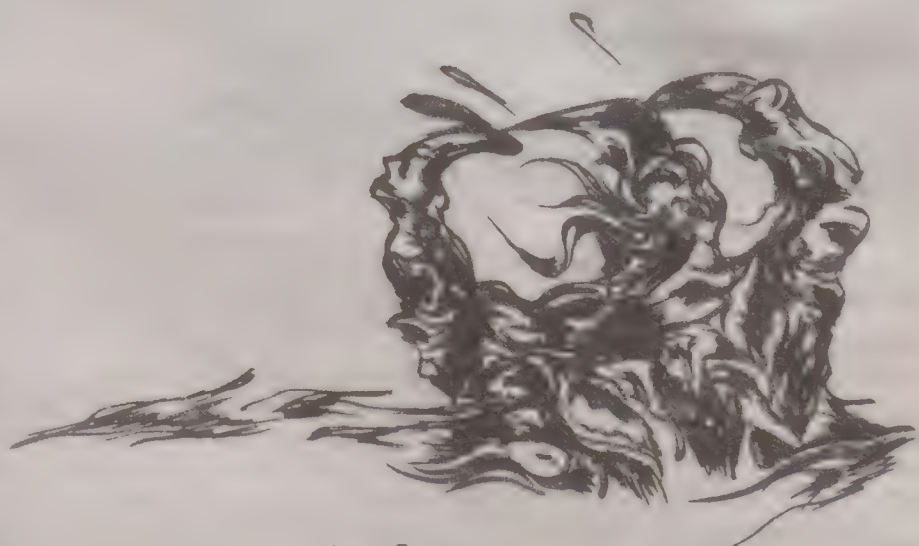
I feel your pain
I see your dream
I caress your soul
You hear me weep.

You walk where I will not
You speak what I cannot
You make what I do not
You think I sleep.

You are a stranger
That I know well
You have wounds
That I cannot heal.

MISTY WELLS

MISTY WELLS



LINDA CUSTER

YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE



Dear Your Guess:

In my profession I often have to deal with people who are very aggressive and verbally combative. Normally, I am able to handle situations such as this; however, every now and then I find myself feeling threatened and even angry. Several days ago I was in just such a situation. I ended up arguing with the individual, which just made the matter worse. My question is this: When being confronted by an individual who is verbally aggressive and combative, how do you de-escalate the situation?

Dear Frustrated:

I often have to deal with angry, highly aggressive, and sometimes intoxicated people. Now, before I start, please let me say that if you deal with this type of situation often, then there is no substitute to taking CPI (Nonviolent Crisis Intervention) Training.

Anyway, I have found that when dealing with a situation like this there are several things to remember. First, always respect the other person's personal space, as well as your own. Try to have a minimum of 1 to 1.5 feet between yourself and the other person. Also, try to turn your body slightly away from the other individual. Not only will this help to create a non-confrontive atmosphere, it will also open up an escape route for you in case you need one. Second, always maintain a calm and steady voice. By raising your voice, you will only feed the other person's aggression. Remember, your non-verbal cues and the way you speak often hold more meaning than what you say. Next, always give the other person several choices about his behaviour. Start with a positive choice and consequence followed by a negative choice and consequence. An example of this is: "If you

calm down and talk to me without shouting I will see if we have anymore stock in the back-room; however, if you keep yelling at me I will have to ask you to leave the store." (That example came from my many long years as a clerk at a local 7-11 store). Finally, try to remember that you do not know what is going on in the other person's life. When someone is becoming highly aggressive and verbally combative with you, the chances are that s/he is not even mad at you but is instead displacing his/her frustration, anxiety, fears or insecurities onto you (so don't take it personally). Sometimes silence is the best thing to use, as this will allow the other person to 'vent' what is really bothering him/her.

As a final note, please remember to always keep the safety of yourself and everyone around you in mind.

ANYWAY, THAT'S MY GUESS...

If you want to send any questions, ideas or stories that you would like me to comment on, you have three ways of getting them to me. You can give them to Ron or Natasha of Our Voice, you can drop them off in the downstairs Casual Labour Office or you can E-Mail them to: yourguess29@hotmail.com.

MYSTERY OF THE MONTH

The mystery of last month's hidden quote is concealed within the garments of poverty and want – and is well suited to reflect the issues and concerns addressed by Our Voice. The correct answer is "A Friend In Need Is A Friend Indeed."

Okay! So maybe the words were hidden a little too well and that made the quote just a little too obscure after all – but that's just exactly the point it needed to make. The first version that never made it to print was too easy and anybody who saw it got it right away – so where was the challenge in that? Without the challenge the value of learning is diminished – or at least so we've been told – and we all "know" that anything easy isn't worthwhile – right? No pain – no gain! And so it is that this popular truism of social folklore can cause the simple to give way to the complicated. The search for greater wisdom foolishly seeks to make life more difficult ...

Back to the "friend thing" – I've had enough difficulty with it over the years that I'm always willing to dig deep to shed new light on murky understanding. Friendships are important to me – but a lot of little things seem to interfere more than they maybe should. The quote in question is one of them. It's often used to belittle the character of the needy. It casts doubt upon the very validity of friendship – to somehow define it as a diabolical device that threatens our well-being. To beware the demands and expectations of friendship fosters a

paranoia that keeps us isolated from others – and discourages many from being compassionate or generous. These are not good things. Since no man is an island unto himself and the best ship is friendship, the challenge is to look deeper to find another level of meaning – some clue to a more careful interpretation of what friends and need are all about.

A friend is someone "attached to another by affection or esteem" and "not hostile." If a friend is therefore someone who is not going to hurt us, why does social folklore have so many warnings against having one? Take care in choosing your friends lest you be judged accordingly? That one bothers me too. I only choose friends that have qualities I admire. If I'm found guilty by association I'd like to be found having those same qualities. Since we are whatever we think we are, is the risk really that our friends can somehow plug into us and change something about what we think? Or is the function of friendship to challenge us to grow and change – to become something more today than yesterday?

Need is first a "necessary duty or obligation" and secondly "having a lack of something desirable." However, the actual state of being in need first means to be "in want of something" and secondly means being "under obligation." The main meaning of need shifts when it is used to describe the person with the need. It seems a needy person is thereby defined as less of a righteous person – someone less moral – a deprived

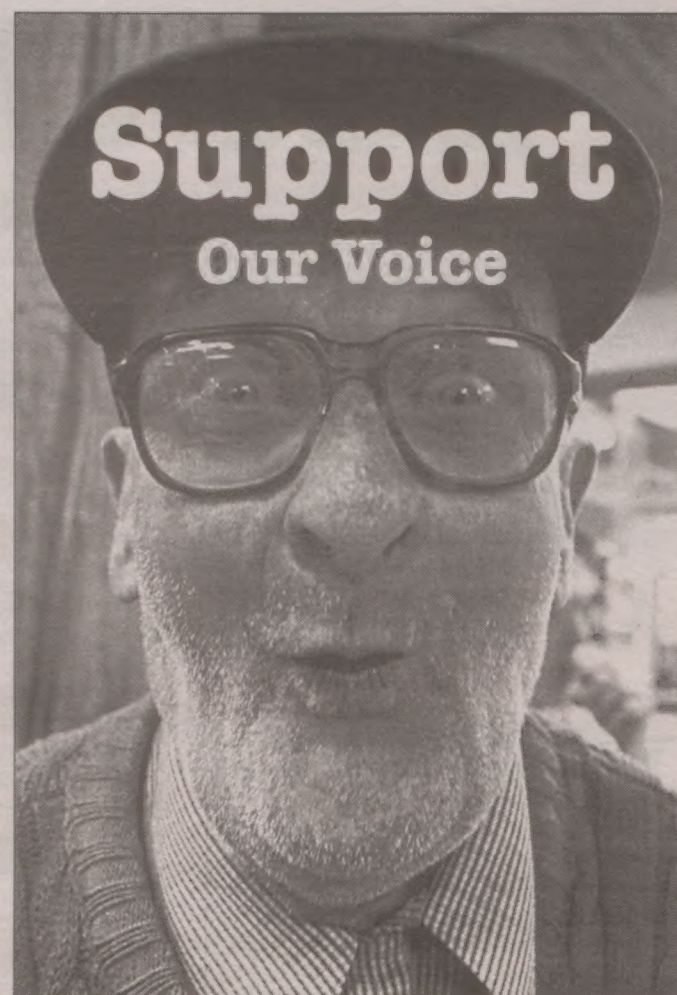
individual somehow lacking in its human parts. Am I being oversensitive to the implications of word usage? Or does society in fact associate some moral deprivation with poverty?

Does the friend in need truly transform into a deprived, hostile entity that threatens our existence? Or do we just act like he does? Can the purpose and meaning hidden within a word actually change the way we think or feel? Do we avoid seeking help so that we are not labelled as a needy person ... and therefore a lesser person ... than our fellow human being? Is it true that sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me? Or are we truly susceptible to the words of others? Is this why we need to be careful in our choice of friends? Does folklore instruct us only to befriend those who don't think less of us for seeking to help ourselves – to better our circumstances in life?

Or is the real danger that we may become "under obligation" to our friends and have to meet our own need for growth and change – whether we want to or not?

To reveal that which is hidden can be a good thing – though difficult for those of us used to stumbling around in the dark. My toes are already bruised enough, so please e-mail your own illuminations about this quote to mysteryofthemonth@yahoo.com

MISTY WELLS



Providing poor men and women with a chance to take control of their lives is the purpose of Our Voice. For seven years now we have given opportunities to more than 2000 people in Edmonton who have found themselves living in poverty.

Our Voice is a project of Bissell Centre and was founded in 1994 to empower people who were homeless or at risk of becoming so, as they work toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. With more than a seven-year history, the Our Voice organization has gained notoriety for honest news reporting and our unique approach to addressing poverty.

Yes, I would like to contribute to Our Voice!

Our Voice has come a long way but needs more to be done and we cannot do it without you. Your tax-deductible financial contribution will allow us to continue our commitment of helping the homeless and the unemployed transition into gainful employment.

Won't you please take a minute and send in your contribution today? Your giving and supportive spirit will not go unrecognized.

Please send a cheque to:

Our Voice 10527-96 Street
Edmonton AB. T5H 2H6

Your money will go toward:

- Helping with the printing costs of Our Voice.
- Computer and writing training for our vendors.
- Continued support and empowerment services for vendors.

Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation for
\$100.00 \$75.00 \$50.00 Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

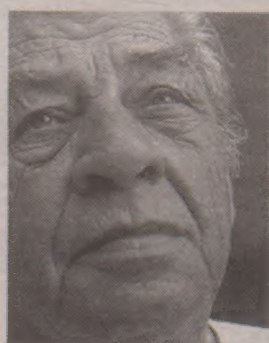
Organization (if any): _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Reg Taylor

advertising sales
freelance writer
Our Voice vendor



Our Voice Magazine / Bissell Centre / Native News

Office Hours:
Tuesday to Friday
8 AM to 1 PM

#101, 11816-82ST
Edmonton, AB
T5B 2Z3
Phone: (780) 471-6790

PEOPLES COLUMNIST



Art and Soul

Veronica Marten has matured considerably through the process of many tragic experiences during her 56 years. She's a full-blooded Cree Native from a family of 3 boys and 3 girls. She also has 7 children of her own.

Veronica has experienced some of the most horrid situations imaginable. At age 6, Veronica went to a residential school in Fort Chipewyan, Alta. Her teachers would often tell her that speaking and talking to other students about the Cree language and culture was prohibited.

Since Veronica's Cree mother was fully aware of the White man's way of attempting to simulate Natives into mainstream society, she would often suggest to the children that speaking the Cree language at home was necessary as a way of preserving their culture.

Veronica remembers teachers not allowing her Native classmates the right to speak Cree in class, depriving them of their language and cultural tra-

ditions. Quite often, when student's were caught secretly speaking Cree in class, teachers would assault them in various ways.

She says, "The teachers would bang the student's head on the school walls. They would even go as far as pulling the ears and hair of students. They would also strap the hands of their students with a ruler. I saw all of that."

When Veronica was 13 her schooling was disrupted. Her mother wanted the young Veronica to help raise her 7 children. So Veronica took a one year leave of absence from residential school.

Her one year's absence had a negative impact on her ability to perform in school. Her grades started to drop and Veronica fell behind her classmates.

At age 17 Veronica's life seemed to be taking a turn for the better, but little did she realize what life's road had in store for her.

She married a Metis man who restricted Veronica from teaching her children the Cree language. Her husband was always trying to assimilate her to the ways of the White man. Her husband beat her whenever he noticed her making an effort to teach her children to speak Cree.

Veronica's 10-year marriage was starting to break off at the seams. During that time some sad news also arrived at her door. Her mother passed away from cancer. The loss of her mother was traumatic for Veronica. So were the hardships of her long-term marriage.

By age 27, Veronica realized that she had enough of the physically abusive marriage. She decided to apply for a divorce.

After having experienced a failed marriage and the tragic loss of her mother, Veronica started to see the light. She found employment as a bar waitress from the years 1978 to 1990 raising her 7 children

on her own.

During that time she lived a peaceful life until the hands of the Creator came down and took her daughter away. One of her daughters died of cancer 7 years ago.

When Veronica's children were all grown-up and living independently, she started volunteer work at both Bissell Centre and Mustard Seed Street Church from 1996 to 2000.

The retired mother recently started participating in the Native Arts and Crafts Program offered at Bissell Centre. The creative program was first introduced to the public in January 22nd, 2002. The program is currently funded by (ECALA) Education Community Adult Learning Association. Bissell's Thrift Shoppe also provides some of the arts and crafts material for the program.

The participants are offered free instruction and are given the opportunity to make a wide range of arts and crafts that may include dream catchers, chokers, necklaces, key chains, gauntlets, mitts, baby moccasins, and other items of interest.

Recently Veronica put her heart and soul into creating a Native choker for one of her daughter's birthday celebrations.

The program also hopes to offer a parenting program as a way of facilitating traditional parenting.

JOHN ZAPANTIS

For more information on how to get involved in the Native Arts and Crafts Program, contact Arts and Crafts Instructor Kari Harrison, or Manager of Emergency Support Services, Carolyn Cush at 423-2285, ext. 125, Bissell Centre, 10527 - 96 Street. The program is offered free of charge on every Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.



Kari Harrison (Native Arts & Crafts Instructor) LEFT
Veronica Marten (Student) RIGHT

"Participants are offered free instruction and are given the opportunity to make a wide range of arts and crafts."

Performers Wanted!

Family Entertainment Night (Coffee House)

**Open Stage! Live Music!
Light Supper! Poetry Reading!**

DOOR PRIZES!!

Tuesday, MAY 21st

**Supper 6 PM
Music at 7 PM**

Bissell Centre

10527 - 96 St.

Contact: Earl @ 423-2285 ext. 144

Philia Advocacy Group

(Friendship & Persistence (Luke 11))

An Advocate:

"...pleads on behalf of another person or persons, speaking and/or writing persuasively in support of an individual (or individuals) or cause."

Philia Advocacy Group:

"...helps individuals and families relate to structures and institutions having governance or control over people's lives."

As a not for profit organization The PHILIA ADVOCACY GROUP responds to community needs by providing information, support and advocacy services to individuals and families reliant upon structural and government income assistance programs.

Appeal preparations and representation, referrals to material and physical needs, public education and group facilitation on Social Justice issues are some of the services provided.

Referrals come from a wide range of networking connections, including churches, government and private helping agencies and through walk-in contact.

**Philia Advocacy Group
10424 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5J 1Z3**

There is no fee for Philia's Advocacy Service

EDMONTON

Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board

Call 496-5959

Call if you are a landlord or a tenant that needs:

- Advice in residential tenancy matters
- Mediation in a residential tenancy dispute
- Education courses or workshops
- To purchase the Question & Answer Booklet or Forms
- Free Landlord and Tenant fact sheets

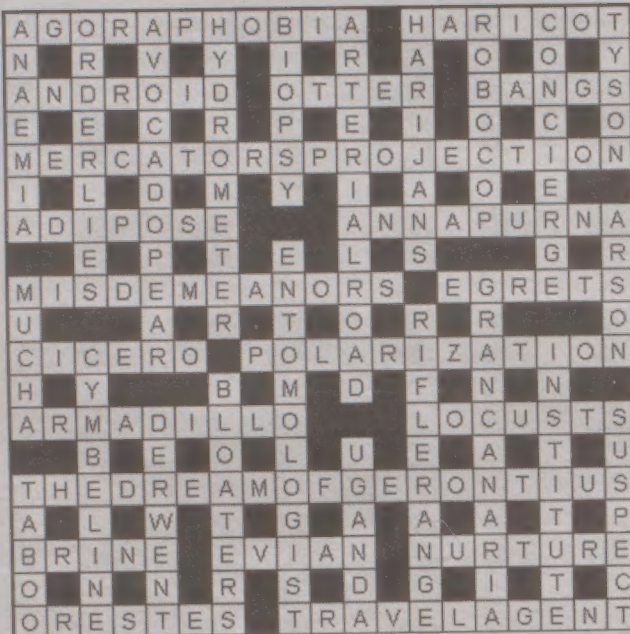
Some topics on the information line include:

- General Information
- Laws and Tips
- Security Deposits
- Starting a Tenancy
- Agreements
- Inspection Reports & Security Deposits
- Resolving Disputes
- Notices

Find information fast using
The Landlord and Tenant Information
Line 24 hours a day. Call 496-5959; press
2, then press 1 and
follow the instructions.

City of Edmonton, Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board
Main Floor Chancery Hall
#3 Sir Winston Churchill Square
(Corner of 102A Avenue and 99 Street)
Edmonton, AB T5J 2C3

Edmonton



Crossword Puzzle

**HITCH
WAREHOUSE**

Bus: (403) 944-9208
Fax: (403) 486-4690

John Reil

17220 - 107 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5S 1E5
1-800-661-7557

Catholic Network for Women's Equality 2002 National Conference

June 7, 8, and 9, 2002

Providence Renewal Centre
Edmonton, AB



Public Keynote Address:

By feminist theologian Mary Malone

Are Women Christian?

This presentation will explore the divergences between women's versions of their Christian presence and the official version.

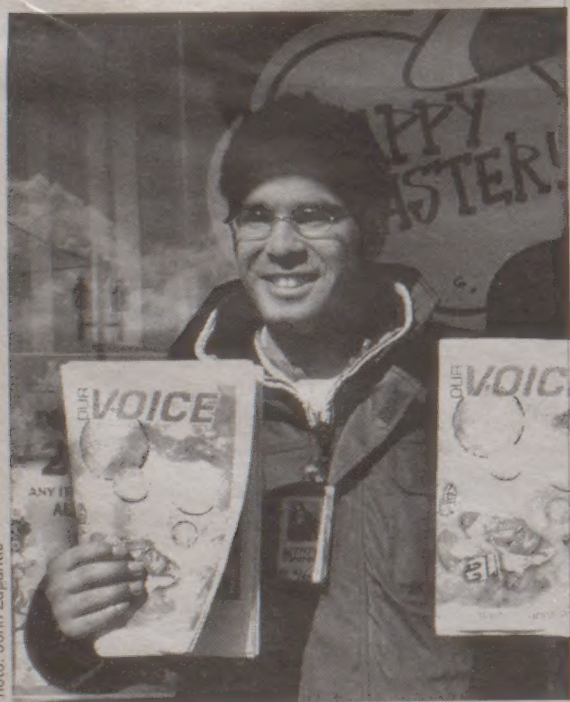
Friday June 7, 7:00pm
Providence Renewal Centre

Tickets \$20.00 adult, \$15.00 student
Group rates available

For more information and full
conference brochure, please contact
Kirsten Goa at 780-465-1188
or kgoa@telusplanet.net

VOM

VENDOR OF THE MONTH



Patrick

His name is Patrick Whiskeyjack. He is just 17 years of age. He is also the youngest vendor to have ever sold a paper in the history of Edmonton's *Our Voice*, *The Spare Change Magazine*.

His stepfather is Art Piche, the famous *Our Voice* vendor, writer and winning poet of numerous Songs of the Street poetry competitions.

Despite his stepfather's accomplishments with *Our Voice*, *The Spare Change Magazine*, Patrick has no real desire to follow in the footsteps of his famous stepfather. Instead of doing the "Songs of the Streets Shuffle," the young Patrick would rather shuffle to the thundery sounds of a productive hammer. Patrick has helped build homes throughout Alberta as a carpenter's helper. He would like to become a certified carpenter one day.

Patrick may have consistent abilities as a carpenter, but plumbing by no means qualifies him as a developing Jack-of-all-trades. Patrick honestly admits to his limitations. He says: "I tried doing some plumbing, but I didn't like the digging. So I quit."

Patrick has also managed to keep himself out of trouble by keeping active in organized sports. In the winter season he plays hockey for a team called the Saddle Lake Warriors in

Saddle Lake, Alta.

Sometime during the Christmas month of 2001, Santa Claus delivered a young rookie vendor by the name of Patrick Whiskeyjack to the Distribution Office of *Our Voice*. Patrick Whiskeyjack has been vending since then. His stepfather referred him to the magazine.

Patrick tries not to take vending too seriously. He truly enjoys his position as a vendor. He says: "I vend because I need the money. It's fun. You get to meet new people. I love making money."

One thing assured, our popular bachelor and lady's man doesn't have a shy bone in his body. He says: "The customers, they always have a nice smile and I like meeting nice chicks."

Our bold vendor has some helpful advice to beginning vendors who might be clueless on the first day on the job. He says, "Keep a smile and have a positive attitude."

Patrick has soared like an eagle during his first 6 months of vending the magazine, though as a vendor he's experienced some slight turbulence on one windy day. He says: "Everybody has been pretty nice to me. No one has ever sworn at me, except one person, but I won't say his name. I just ignore him."

Our humble and polite to the public vendor may be found vending in front of Albert's Family Restaurant, 104 Street and Whyte Avenue or in front of Timothy's World Coffee, 104 Street and Whyte Avenue.

JOHN ZAPANTIS

RBC Dominion Securities

#2300, 10155-102 St.
Edmonton, AB
T5J 2P4
Ph. 944-8851



Bissell Centre's
Thrift Shoppes

New and
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We are 100% non-profit
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ALL PROFITS SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES OF BISSELL CENTRE
IN EDMONTON'S INNER CITY

ROBERT P. CHRISTENSEN PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

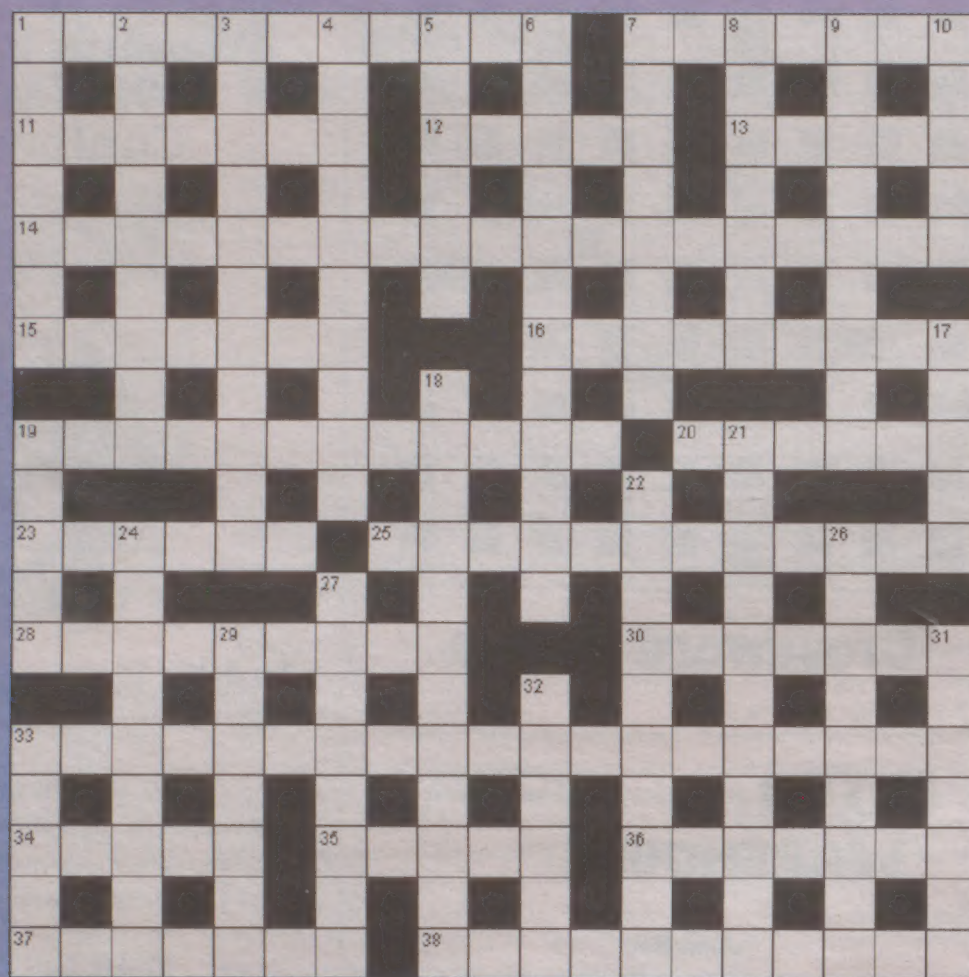
Barristers and Solicitors
11450-124 Street
Edmonton, AB.

Robert P. Christensen
Russell R. Wilkinson

Phone: 454-0387 Fax: 454-0389

General Practise of Law

WORD UP



Across:

1. Anxiety disorder, literally means "fear of the marketplace"
7. Small white bean used for baked beans
11. Role central to Alan Ayckbourn's 1999 'Comic Potential'
12. Web-footed aquatic mammal
13. Fringe of hair cut straight across the forehead
14. Flemish cartographer's distorted view of the world?
15. Tissue where fat is stored
16. Mountain massif of the central Himalayas
19. Woody Allen film 'Crimes and ...'
20. Species of herons with highly-prized plumes
23. Roman soldier, and WWII German spy!
25. Division into two sharply opposed factions
28. Armour-plated mammal with claws
30. Destructive swarming insects
33. Elgar's celebrated oratorio
34. Sea water
35. Proprietary French mineral water
36. Upbringing, experience, learning as opposed to 'nature'
37. Greek character who committed matricide
38. Pioneer Cook was the first such journey-maker!

Down:

1. Blood condition causing pallor and fatigue
2. Well-behaved hospital workers?
3. Green fruit used in guacamole
4. Instrument for measuring density of liquids
5. Removal of living tissue for diagnostic examination
6. In Roman times, Watling Street was one of Britain's greatest
7. Traditionally, Indian untouchables
8. 1987 cyborg policeman film
9. Janitor of a block of flats
10. At 20, he was the youngest heavyweight champion in history
17. Malicious firing?
18. Arthropods could be of interest to this scientist
19. Czech painter, Alphonse, noted for his art nouveau posters
21. Volcanic Atlantic island visited by Columbus in 1502 & many tourists in 20thC!
22. Fairground attraction providing target practice?
24. 1st century AD English king and Shakespeare play
26. Society that promotes science, education, etc.
27. Cured herrings
29. Yorkshire river rising on Fylingdales Moor
31. One 'brought in for questioning'?
32. Land-locked East African country, gained independency 1962
33. Ritual ban

QUOTABLEQUOTECHALLENGE

For the quote this month some detail is provided to give insight into the reasoning behind the Quotable Quote Challenge that asks you to think about the things you think you hear everyday - to think about just what it is you are really being persuaded to hear instead ...

To Grow or not to Grow--That is the Question

Who we are - what we believe - how we act - is determined by the way we think. The things that affect the way we think - the things that prejudice the patterns of our thoughts - are generally based upon many little bits of truth that we string together to form our outlook upon life. Most of us place a great deal of faith in these little sayings and quotes that have been handed down to us from another time - from another place - from another type of lifestyle. They are regarded as condensed versions of the wisdom of the ages. They are also handy tools that help us to drive home a particular point of view. Too often they are used indiscriminately. We use them without thinking about whether or not they are truly appropriate or fairly applied. When we are pressured for a fast decision about something, it is very easy to grab one of these simple maxims to help us make a quick assessment that appears to be logically based. A closer - and much more time-consuming examination - may provide a totally different perspective that reveals a totally different aspect of the face of truth. Unfortunately, we can also slip into the habit of using them to justify our judgments about life - about situations - about other people. Unchallenged, they can keep us ensnared in a singular worldview. They can actually inhibit the free thinking required for growth and awareness.

We live in a fast-paced hi-tech society of instant foods and bubble-packed wisdoms that doesn't let us stop and critically evaluate much of anything. We have neither the time nor opportunity for true reflection, understanding and awareness. We need to trust others to do our

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research for us and must assume that if something is presented as truth, then it probably is truth. In fact, many of us are guilty of accepting mere opinion as gospel - especially if it appears in print or on television. If it triggers some kind of a strong emotional response within us, then we are also likely to develop a very convincing argument that helps to support it too. The time-honoured quips and quotes of folklore pose the same kind of danger to our human potential. Misused and abused - and probably disguised as commonsense - they can be used to support the many issues of hatred. We may find ourselves using them to protect our right to practice greed, envy, lust, pride, apathy, vulgarity or even deception with one another. In truth, whenever we avoid taking time for honest reflection we also practice self-deception, lying to ourselves about who we are and what we truly believe. It is really hard to know where you are going when you can't see where you are. It is also really hard to grow without changing.

Once again, the real challenge (after finally discovering the quote) is to identify how this "hidden quote" may or may not have affected your life ... and to decide whether or not you want to accept it at face value. Hidden within the following letters are the words that combine to form this month's (in)famous quote. The words may appear horizontally, vertically, diagonally or even in reverse. Some of the words you find may need to be used more than once to complete the quote ... and, just as in the real world, some words are there just to confuse things again. Good luck!

The 12-word hidden quote is: "

_____." (check next month's issue to see if you are correct)

Solution to April's puzzle: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." (For some thoughts on the quote, see page 17)

Solutions: Page 19

THE DEBTS BY R. BIESINGER

